

Anthology of all the Principal Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda

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English Exposition by:-

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To My Most Beloved Lord Ram

A humble word of dedication

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent— it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be his very own is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the Lord's holy feet, and finding no words to express my profound gratitude to him, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

Finally, I pay my greatest obeisance to Hanuman, the enlightened devotee of Lord Ram, whom I regard as my Guru (a spiritual guide), without whose blessings this effort would not have borne fruit.

May, 2022

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

Anthology of all the Principal Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda

Preface

'So may I speak these blessed words to the people at large—to the Brahmin, to the Kshatriya, to the Vaishya, and to the Shudra, to my own people and to the foreigner'. (Yajur Veda, 26/2). 'God is given different names due to his virtues and works, such as Agni (fire), Aditya (sun), Vayu (wind), Chandrama (moon), Shukra (mars), Brahm (the supreme Being), Apaha (water), and Prajapati (the creator and care taker, Brahma). Many other names have also been assigned to him'. (Yajur Veda, 32/1). May my mind, capable of illumination, be moved by righteous intentions. It is light of all lights. It goes far away when one is awake, and comes back when one is asleep' (Yajur Veda, 34/1).

'Bear with me a little, and I will show you that there are yet words to speak on God's behalf. I will fetch you my knowledge from afar, for truly my words are not false. Behold God is almighty. He is mighty in strength of understanding' (The Holy Bible, Job 36/2-5). 'With Him is wisdom and strength; He has counsel and understanding' (Bible, Job 12/13). 'Behold God is great, and we do not know Him' (Bible, Job 36/26). 'For who is God except the Lord?' (Bible, 2 Samuel 22/32). 'And He shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain' (Bible, 2 Samuel 23/4).

'Lord, you are my lamp, Oh Lord; the Lord shall enlighten my darkness' (Bible, 2 Samuel 22/29). 'Remember His covenant always, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations' (Bible, 1 Chronicles, 16/31-33). 'Remember to magnify His work, of which men have sung' (Bible, Job 36/24). 'As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is praised; He is a shield to all who trust in Him' (Bible, 2 Samuel 22/31).

'God is my strength; and He makes my way perfect' (Bible, 2 Samuel 22/33). 'Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, and let them say among the Nations, 'The Lord reigns'; Let the sear roar, and all its fullness; let the field rejoice, and all that is in it. Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the Lord---' (Bible, 1 Chronicles, 16/15).

'Behold, this we have searched out; it is true. Hear it, and know for yourself' (Bible, Job 5/27); know that 'The Lord is God; the Lord is One' (Bible, Deuteronomy 6/4), and 'The Lord is within you while you are with him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you' (Bible, 2 Chronicles 15/2).

Oh Lord! Lead us from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality (Brihadaranyak Upanishad, 1/3/28).

ईशावास्यबृहदारण्यजाबालहंसपरमहंससुबालमन्त्रिकानिरालम्बत्रिशिखीब्राह्मणमण्डलब्राह्मणा—

द्वयतारकपैङ्गलभिक्षुतुरीयातीताध्यात्मतारसारयाज्ञवल्क्यशाट्यायनीमुक्तिकानां—

शुक्लयजुर्वेदगतानामेकोनविंशतिसंख्याकानामुपनिषदां—पूर्णमद_इति_शान्तिः_॥५४॥

(Shukla Yajur Veda, Muktika-panishad, 1/54)

Sri Ram advised his ardent devotee Hanuman that there are 19 Upanishads in the Shukla (white) Yajur Veda and their 'Shanti Mantra' is 'Purna-madha Purna-midam' (पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम्). These 19 Upanishads are the following— (1) Ishavasya, (2) Brihadaranyak, (3) Jabal, (4)Hansa, (5)Paramhansa, (6) Subal, (7) Mantrika, (8) Niralamb, (9) Trishikhi-brahmin, (10)Mandal-brahmin, (11) Adwye-tarak, (12) Paingal, (13) Bhikshuk, (14)Turiyateet, (15)Adhyatma, (16) Tarsar, (17) Yagyawalka, (18) Shatyayani and (19) Muktika [54].

(Shukla Yajur Veda, Muktika-panishad, 1/54)

The above quotation from 'Mukti Upanishad' belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, which is chapter no. 19 of this anthology, firmly establishes the names of the Upanishads of this Veda, and the sequence to be followed while studying and narrating them. In this anthology, in true Vedic tradition, I have followed exactly the same sequence as prescribed by Sri Ram to Hanuman in listing and narrating those Upanishads, viz., I start this anthology with the Ishavashya Upanishad, and culminate the anthology with Mukti Upanishad.

This book presents a simple English rendering of all the Upanishads the Shukla Yajur Veda, explaining their deep metaphysical and spiritual concepts in a way that even an ordinary person would be able to follow them. The English text that is presented here follows the original Sanskrit version verse by verse, and is accompanied by simple explanatory notes to clarify various concepts as and when they appear in the text, their probable interpretations, along with several appendices etc., which, taken together, will make this book very useful in understanding the philosophy of the Upanishads. It is like a bouquet of flowers that is sure to charm the intellect as much as the Spirit.

Knowledge, especially when it relates to divinity and spirituality, is a pleasant perfume which wafts soothingly over the ruffled terrain of our mundane, arduous existence and lends purpose to it, gives hope in the otherwise hopeless whirlpool represented by this mirage-like world which traps and sucks everything down in its vortex of delusions, and is like the bright and glorious Sun rising in the horizon to lighten up all the directions of the realm of our existence and lift the veil of darkness of ignorance and delusions that has spiritually blinded us.

As we have seen, there are in all 19 principal Upanishads in the Shukla Yajur Veda—and each one of them have been included in this anthology as a separate chapter. I've attempted to present each verse of the text in an easily readable style, and have viewed them through the looking-glass of a contemporary modern man, thereby making the entire volume and its astounding ancient wisdom easily accessible to him. At the beginning of each chapter, I've added a brief introduction to highlight the main theme that the particular Upanishad expounds and elucidates; it gives an idea of its contents. Each chapter has the full and complete English rendering of each and every verse of the original Sanskrit text of the concerned Upanishad.

Further, a number of appendices are added to elucidate clearly on various concepts or topics appearing in the main text, though I've tried to explain them on the spot briefly wherever they occur in the text.

Let us have a brief glimpse of the chapters now. Chapter no. 1 is ‘Isha-Vashya Upanishad’ which deals with the fundamental spiritual question—where or what is ‘Isha’, or the supreme Lord.

Chapter no. 2 is ‘Brihad Aranyak Upanishad’ which is by far the largest and most comprehensive in its sweep of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism at their best; it is in a standard pattern of questions and their answers which has been the hallmark of Upanishad teachings.

Chapter no. 3 is ‘Jabal Upanishad’ which describes the Avimukta realms which provide a creature liberation and deliverance from this world; it also deals with the subject of Sanyas.

Chapter no. 4 is ‘Hans Upanishad’ in which an enlightened creature is likened to a divine Swan, a wise bird in mythology, and it briefly deals with the fundamental concepts in the realm of Yoga.

Chapter no. 5 is ‘Param Hans Upanishad’ describing the rewards of being a realised soul which culminates in Sanyas.

Chapter no. 6 is ‘Subal Upanishad’ which, like Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, covers a wide range of metaphysical and spiritual subjects, such as creation; the magnificent and stupendous nature of the primary element called the Atma (soul/spirit) of a creature; the broad view that all that exists, from the most minute and subtle to the most extensive and gross, are all the various revelations of the same ‘one’ element called Atma; it also deals simultaneously with the concepts of Sanyas, Mukti etc.

Then we come to chapter no. 7 which is ‘Mantriko-panishad’; it highlights that the essence or soul of all the Mantras, which are divine and holy words or alphabets or syllables with majestic and stupendous mystical and ethereal powers, is Brahm; it also propounds that the pure Atma is like a divine Swan.

Chapter no. 8 is ‘Niralamb Upanishad’ which defines such concepts as Brahm, Jiva, Ishwar, Prakriti, World, Karma, Caste/creed, Sanyas, Worldly fetters, Gyan and Agyan, Hell and Bliss etc. in a very succinct and pointed way.

Chapter no. 9 is ‘Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad’ which describes the beginning and expansion of the creation; it delves on the subject of Yoga exhaustively, describing its relevant topics such as Naadi, Chakra, Mudras, Mokaha etc.

Chapter no. 10 is another Upanishad dealing with Yoga, and it is named ‘Mandal Brahmin Upanishad’ (perhaps because the sage who enunciated this text was the senior most seer/sage in that district where he resided).

Chapter no. 11 ‘Advai Tarak Upanishad’ describing the Tarak Yoga, or meditation that provides emancipation and salvation to the creature.

Chapter no. 12 is ‘Paingal Upanishad’ which, like Brihad Aranyaka and Trishikhi Brahmin, describe the genesis of creation; it also describes the four great sayings of

the Vedas, called the Mahavakyas; it goes on to enumerate the temperaments, thoughts and behaviours of a realised person, or a Gyani, leading to his liberation and deliverance from this ensnaring world.

Chapter no.13 is 'Bhikshuk Upanishad' which describes the characteristic features of a Bhikshuk, or a wandering monk, a mendicant, a friar.

Chapter no. 14 is 'Turiya-Teet Upanishad' detailing the temperament, thoughts and life of a truly realised and renunciate person that leads him to the 'ultimate truth'. It is one of great Upanishads dealing with that fourth state of consciousness which gives perpetual bliss to an aspirant.

Chapter no. 15 is 'Adhyatma Upanishad' which, as the name implies, is a major treatise on spiritualism; it virtually summarizes this concept and is highly focused on the Atma and matters of the spirit, describing, inter alia, how to obtain salvation and emancipation, liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackles a creature to this ensnaring world.

Chapter no. 16 is 'Tarsar Upanishad' which, like the Jabal Upanishad, describes the Avimukta realm that bestows emancipation and salvation to a creature, along with the concept of Mantras that aid in it.

Chapter no. 17 is 'Yagyawalkya Upanishad', in which a brief life sketch of this great sage and seer who was one of the greatest exponents of Advaita Vedanta and championed its cause repeatedly, is included, and chapter no. 18 is 'Shatyayani Upanishad', both deal in detail with the various aspects of Sanyas.

Chapter no. 18 is the 'Shatyayani Upanishad' which has forty verses in all, and it enumerates the salient features of a 'Vishnu Ling Sanayasi'. This Upanishad especially deals with that Sanyasi who is a devotee of Lord Vishnu, and hence called a 'Vishnu Ling'; he has completely dissociated himself honestly from this deluding material world and pursues the path of spiritual enhancement leading to self realisation and self purification. This ultimately leads him to the realisation of the ultimately Truth about himself and the creation, and helps him to break free from the endless cycle of transmigration.

And finally we have chapter no. 19 which is 'Mukti Upanishad'; it details a spiritual discussion between Lord Ram and his most enlightened devotee, follower and disciple Hanuman. In it, the Lord describes the eternal importance and significance of studying the various Upanishads and classifies them according to the Vedas that they belong to; this Upanishad also elucidates in great detail the concepts of Mukti (liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation), and hence gets its particular name on the basis of this fact.

It is to be noted that as a standard practice, every Upanishad has a 'Shanti Paath' at the beginning as well as at the end of it. The 'Shanti Paath' of all the Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads is the same. Hence, only a brief mention is made of its in the text of the individual Upanishads, while the complete Shanti Paath is given as a separate Appendix no. 1 at the end of this book so that the reader can refer to it as needed.

Primarily, the ‘Shanti Paath’ of a Upanishad is a verse recited at the beginning and the end of each Upanishad as a means to pray to the Supreme Being and invoke the Lord’s blessings so that the reader is granted ‘eternal spiritual peace’ (Shanti).

The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad (Chapter 2) has an elaborate section (Canto 2, Brahmin 5) dealing with what is metaphorically called the ‘Madhu Vidya’. Hence, a special Sukta dedicated to this theme, known as the ‘Mudhu Sukta’, is included as appendix no. 2 of this volume.

It would be noted while going through the texts of these Upanishads that the Supreme Being is many a times referred to as the ‘Purush’, the divine cosmic Lord. There is an excellent Sukta (a hymn used as a prayer) dedicated to this Purush, called the ‘Purush Sukta’, so I have included it in appendix no. 3.

The Shukla Yajur Veda to which the Upanishads of the present volume belong was revealed to the extraordinarily wise and genius sage Yagyavalkya. Besides this, the Supreme Being in the form of the Sun God has revealed a major Upanishad called the Mandal Brahmin to this enlightened sage (Chapter 10). So a divine Sukta called the ‘Surya Sukta’ belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda and dedicated to the Sun God has been included as appendix no. 4.

There are many esoteric concepts, principles, topics or terms of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism forming an integral part of the Upanishad Texts, as their lexicon, that need a detailed explanation and more elaboration for their proper and correct understanding, to make their meaning clear so that they become useful for a wider and better understanding of the texts of the Upanishads, making them easy and comprehensible for even a lay person.

Since such concepts, principles, topics or terms are many, since the body of relevant information is broad-based and extensive, and since they need a detailed analysis and exhaustive explanation which can be applied to the reading of all Upanishads, this author (Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia) thought it prudent and practical to publish them as independent Books by collating and curating relevant information from a wide swathe of the Upanishadic texts.

An appendix no. 5 at the end of our current book on the ‘Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads’ provides to the reader a list of such Books, along with the websites and links from where they can be independently accessed / downloaded if the reader is interested to do so.

At the end of this book, some **diagrams and sketches** are added which give a visual representation of some of the quintessential esoteric concepts that form an integral part of the Upanishads.

Meaning—The word ‘Upanishad’ is composed of three Sanskrit syllables— ‘up’, ‘ni’ and ‘shad’. (a) The word ‘up’ means ‘come near, sit down, benevolent, worship, destroy, a cure or remedy, to become disease or fault free, enjoy, without hindrance’. (b) The word ‘ni’ means ‘not, night, darkness and ignorance, special or specific as

well as all-inclusive and complete'. (c) The word 'shad' means '6 schools of thought, knowledge, to teach, to learn, to calm down, to destroy'.

Hence, the composite word Upanishad means :- (i) to come and sit down quietly before the teacher, (ii) to sit quietly after having acquired truthful knowledge about the reality, having calmed down all agitations and having dispelled all confusions and doubts, (iii) to remove the darkness of ignorance by the light of knowledge, (iv) the endeavour that removes/dispels the darkness of ignorance and enhances/propagates light of knowledge and (v) to find remedy for the disease/illness represented by this world. (vi) While defining the word Upanishad, Sankaracharya says, 'Seekers of emancipation... deliberate on it (i.e., the knowledge that is called Upanishad) with steadiness and certainty' (8 Upanishads, Advaita Ashram, Cal., 1989, p. 99-100). He says that the Upanishads, like a mother, never tire of reminding us of our true nature. The Atma, which is the focus of the Upanishad, is pure bliss, is eternal and is synonymous with the cosmic soul called Brahma'.

The term Upanishad implies that an initiated disciple sits down before his wise teacher for the purpose of confidential communication of the secret doctrine called Rahasya concerning the relationship between the creator and the created individual. This knowledge can be communicated to only the deserving candidates and not to all and sundry because not only will they ridicule it but also because it would be a waste of time and energy.

The Upanishads, therefore, set at rest ignorance by revealing the knowledge of the eclectic supreme Spirit; they reveal and explain the esoteric mystery which underlines or rests underneath the external system of things. They are profound doctrines having mystical and mysterious meaning. They are a class of philosophical writings whose main aim is the exposition and elucidation of the secret meaning of the Vedas, and they are regarded as the source of Sankhya school of Indian philosophy and are synonymous with Vedanta.

Man can't achieve happiness through mere physical enjoyments. Absolute happiness can result only from liberation, and it follows therefore that spiritual enlightenment alone, which frees the Atma from all delusions, can provide liberation and deliverance from the unending cycle of deeds/action and their results. Unfulfilled desires and yearnings to fulfill them further propel the creature towards more deeds/action and their newer results. This cycle causes a hurdle for the unification of the Atma with the supreme Brahma which is called true and ultimate emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance of the creature.

Deussen has expressed the fundamental ideal of the Upanishads in the following words, 'The Brahma, the power which presents itself before us has materialised in all existing things, it creates, sustains, preserves and receives back into itself again all the worlds, this eternal, infinite, divine power is identical with the Atma which, after stripping off everything external, we discover in ourselves as our real, most essential Being, our individual self, the soul/spirit. This doctrine has found expression most pointedly and clearly in the Upanishad's dictum which later became the confession of faith of millions of Indians in the word 'That art thou' (i.e., the cosmos is Brahma) and 'the world exists only in so far as thou (Brahma) are conscious of it'.

What are the Upanishads basically? The Upanishads are also known as Vedanta, which literally mean the ‘end or summarised version or the essence of the Veda’. The chief Upanishads are part of and incorporated in the main text of the Vedas in their Sanhitas, Brahmins and Aranyakas section. For example, (a) Aitereyo Upanishad is a part of Aitereyo Aranyak of Rig Veda (2/4/6); (b) Taittiriya Upanishad is a part of Taittiriya Aranyak of Krishna Yajur Veda (7/8); (c) The Brihad-Aranyak Upanishad is contained in the last 6 Cantos of the 14th chapter of Shatpath Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda and; (d) Cantos 3-8 of Chandogya Brahmin of Talwakar branch of the Sam Veda is called Chandogya Upanishad.

There are, however, many Upanishads which have been expounded and enunciated independently by scholarly, wise and enlightened sages who had deep understanding and grasp of spiritual and metaphysical subjects. For example, Jabalo-panishad by sage Jabal, Shandilyo-panishad by sage Shandilya, Shaunako-panishad by sage Shaunak, Paingalo-panishad by sage Paingal, and Yagyavalko-panishad by sage Yagyavalkya. Such Upanishads are therefore named after those sages.

The great and magnificent Upanishads in Hindu philosophy are called the ‘Head (or brain, crown) of the Vedas’; they are like the ‘light and illumination of the Vedas’, for had it not been for them the glory of the Vedas would have been reduced to mere abstract rituals and religious formalities. The Vedas are said to be revealed texts over a long period of time and are divided into three parts according to their subject matter—Karma (rituals), Upasana (worship, devotion, contemplation, honour and reverence) and Gyan (acquisition of truthful knowledge about the eternal, universal and essential Truth and Reality about existence which is the ultimate of all spiritual pursuit). The ‘Karma’ section involves doing elaborate rituals, doing auspicious deeds and taking righteous actions such as the doing of various fire sacrifices, observance of various sacraments, making charities, giving alms, adhering to religiously sanctioned way of life and diligently observing the codes of conduct laid out for the different spheres of life, such as the four Ashrams (Brahmcharaya, Grishastha, Vanprastha and Sanyas Ashrams) and the various classes into which the society was divided to maintain law and order (such as the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras). In short to strictly and religiously follow the various dos and don’ts of a regulated form of life so as to prepare one for the next step which involves worship, devotion and contemplation upon his chosen deity which represents divinity and ideals selected by him. These two phases lead to the third phase— acquisition of truthful knowledge about a person’s true-self as well as about the supreme Truth and the absolute Reality of this existence. The main focus of this third stage is to learn and get enlightened about what is known as the supreme transcendental cosmic consciousness called Brahma by the Upanishads, and its counterpart, the Atma, residing in the individual creature as its individual consciousness. The realisation of these two entities as being one and indivisible from one another is the main focus of the teachings of the great Upanishads, and this leads to the feeling of spiritual fulfillment and having attained liberation and deliverance from ignorance and its accompanying delusions which translates into emancipation and salvation of the soul.

The Upanishads propound and enunciate upon that pristine knowledge about spirituality, metaphysics and divine philosophy which makes Hinduism so unique and spiritually refined—an all-inclusive, open-ended, pluralistic approach which is tolerant, non-dogmatic and non-fanatical and non-bigot. They are unbiased and highly

evolved intellectual exercises involving multidimensional logic, skillful rational thinking, high erudition and excellent scholarship laced with traditional wisdom and spiritualism. They are not blind and abstract dogmas but practical philosophies and guidelines to enlighten a man on his true nature and goal in life. The same basic truth has been expounded from various angles such that an aspirant or learner can understand the concept one way or the other according to his mental caliber. The various paths are open to him according to his individual temperaments and needs.

The primary purpose of the Vedas was the spiritual welfare of the man and to ensure that he breaks free from the endless cycle of birth and death (or transmigration) and find his ultimate peace and rest. This was not possible in other forms of life in this creation simply because in the entire scheme of creation it was only the man who was given the needed intelligence and decision making authority and powers to decide what is correct and good for himself and his soul. But being shrouded in the labyrinth of rituals and complicated verses which were so abstract, mystical and esoteric, the real intention was forgotten and the entire exercise was reduced to learning by rote of the thick and dense texts which became beyond the reach and comprehension, because of their complexity, of even those few who were sincerely inspired to unravel their secrets and inclined to break free from the cycle of transmigration.

Then came the legion of enlightened and wise men who had extraordinary intelligence and deep insight as well as the gift of the language to unravel these secrets for the benefit of the human kind. They learnt and became enlightened about the fundamental philosophical dimension of these Vedas, unraveled their basic ideas and intentions by deep ponderings and contemplation, proposed and tested hypothesis, applied variables, corrected any errors they discovered in their thinking, retraced their steps and moved ahead with the new path which stood the test of methodical, scientific and empirical experimentations. When a successful method evolved, they preached it to their disciples in the words of the Upanishads. These doctrines enshrined in these texts are therefore a result of extensive and industrious labour, insight and research. Exponents of Upanishadic philosophy have indeed tried to explain their precepts in scientific ways. The readings of these texts have had a profound psychological impact on generations after generations. They have tried to present a remedy to a world overwhelmed by misery and tumult.

These genius sages and seers liberally explained the great spiritual secrets to their disciples in as many ways as there were sages and seers. They lived separately in seclusion, or in grouped hermitages such as monasteries, and spent their entire lives meditating, contemplating and teaching these profound spiritual truths to their disciples who often were their own sons, as in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 6 where Uddalak taught his son Shewketu. Sometimes even lowly men taught great kings, such as in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 4 where the great grandson of king Jansrut was taught by low caste cart-man called Raikwa; or kings taught Brahmins as in Brihad Aranyaka, Canto 2, Brahmin 1-2. Often such teaching took the form of great debates and a question-answer session held during some great religious occasion where learned scholars from far and wide assembled, and in this congregation profound theological and metaphysical concepts were thoroughly discussed, debated and explained, such as in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 4 where Yagyavalkya attended one such congregation convened by king Janak. There were occasions where Gods have revealed some Upanishad to a devotee keen to find out the answer to some

query pertaining to the great truths about Atma or soul, such as the case of Nachiketa who was taught by the Yam God (the god of death) in Katho-panishad. Then there is the case of Mandal Brahmin Upanishad where the Supreme Being, in the form of the Sun God, had himself taught Yagyavalkya, and the case where one celestial sage has taught another, as in Chandogya, Canto 7 where Sanatkumars had taught sage Narad.

The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad is one place where we find a long list of sages or seers (2/6/1-3; 4/6/1-3; and 6/5/1-3) who subscribed to the eclectic and pristine philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta (i.e. the concept of non-duality in creation, of the irrefutable universality and unequivocal uniformity of pure consciousness in the form of the Atma or soul of the individual creature and the supreme transcendental Brahman as the ultimate Truth in creation) of which Yagyavalkya was said to be the most vociferous exponent.

The Upanishads are 'evergreen perennial philosophy'. The Upanishads are forceful, powerful, stupendous, magnificent and eloquent statements made in response to pointed questions by the disciples (seekers/aspirants) who were themselves Rishis of repute. They emphasise the knowing of the 'truth', investigating and discussing it, constantly contemplating upon it and putting them into practice to redefine oneself. They have wide ramifications and transcend all religious and cultural boundaries. The Upanishads are divine words which reflect the glory of the intellect and the depth and width of the knowledge of India's ancient sages and seers. They can be read, thought over, taught and re-written in the form of translations in different languages (while still retaining their originality). They are not lifeless alphabets as such. They are synonymous with the supreme light of knowledge that dispels darkness of ignorance and is symbolic of life. Since the vehicle for transmission of the profound truths are words, the Upanishads emphasis, like the Bible and the Guru Granth Sahib (the scripture of the Sikh religion) that the 'word' is the truth, the reality, the equivalent of the Lord, the God, the Brahman, the cosmic 'Naad' (sound), OM, the very essence of life. The Bible explicitly says— '(a) In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God (gospel of St. John, 1/1), (b) And the word became flesh and dwelt among us— full of grace and truth (John, 1/14)'. How stupendous, how magnificent, how profound, how succinct, how lively are these words indeed! Therefore, the Upanishads are not lifeless books but 'the body' of knowledge, 'the abode' of knowledge. The quest for truth is the spark that injects vitality and vibrancy to a bunch of alphabets which lead the path to enlightenment.

The Upanishads represent the highest citadel of philosophical evolvement of human kind. The canons of the Upanishads are essentially teachings of ancient savants, seers and sages who were erudite and sagacious, genius and enlightened, and had scholarly acumen. They had enunciated the principles of the Ultimate Truth and Reality about this existence and the forces governing it both in philosophical as well as in metaphysical terms. These treatises were not merely hypothetical but empirical as well; they were the result of deep investigative minds which delved deep into the reaches of the unknown and after thorough exploration, investigation, examination, experimentation and application, they arrived at irrefutable, incontrovertible conclusions. They were pioneers in this field as much as they delved into hitherto unknown realm of metaphysics and, therefore, can be called the forefathers of constructive and logical thinking as well as spiritual scientists.

These sages/seers concluded, inter alia, that the physical world perceived through the sensory organs was not the real world; it did not provide peace and happiness to the creature. Since everyone wants peace, tranquility, bliss and happiness, there must be something other than this physical world that was the 'truth'. This, they realised was the Brahma (or Brahmn). Where is Brahma seated? 'Brahma is hidden in the heart and it is known by the pointed and subtle intellect' (Katha-Upanishad, 1/3/12) and 'The immortal Brahma alone is before and behind, to the right and left, above and below. This world is verily the supreme Brahma' (Mundak Upanishad, 2/2/12).

The creature, they concluded, was not the physical, decayable, tormented body, but the pure, indestructible Atma (soul). This Atma (soul) is pure consciousness, eternal, peaceful, happy and blissful. This awareness was self-realisation. How is it obtained? 'Self is attained by practice of truth, austerity, right knowledge and continence, self control and abstinence' (Mundak Upanishad, 3/1/5). The laboratory was their mind-intellect apparatus; the chemical for the various tests was their power of intellectual discrimination, and penetrating insight was their microscope. The fact that they obtained peace, tranquility, happiness and bliss as well as contentedness proved the fact that their theory was indeed correct, that it was indeed the ultimate Reality which mankind sought for. Their dedicated and focused understanding, outstanding research, analytical thinking, surgical precision and superb examples to illustrate their observances resulted in the pronouncement of doctrines having wide ramification and tremendous import. They disbursed this vast ocean of knowledge for the benefit of their disciples (i.e., seekers/aspirants/students), and through them, to the humanity as a whole. These doctrines, which are absolute Truths or irrefutable axioms, have been condensed for posterity in the form of Upanishads. These most venerated books are expositions of superb minds with matured thinking, striking in their clarity of thought and expression, are precise and clinical, have a strong fundamental basis that can be experimented by serious seekers as to their veracity and practicability, and have had a tremendous impact on western scholars who chose to study them.

The Upanishads abound in beautiful imagery, allegories and similes. These are intended to make the concepts simpler to understand and more abiding to remember just like parables that leave an indelible mark on the man's sub-conscious. For example, (i) The Katha Upanishad has an allegory of the chariot—the body is the chariot and the individual is the master (Katha Upanishad, 1/3/3-4), (ii) The Mundak Upanishad gives the example of two birds eating from the same tree—one bird is the soul of the creature while the other is the supreme Soul of the cosmos (Mundak Upanishad, 3/1/1-2). (iii) Similarly, creation has been vividly described 'as a spider spreading out and withdrawing its thread, herbs growing and perishing on earth and hair on the human skin' in Mundak Upanishad (1/1/7). (iv) With the example of the 'bow' as the medium of the knowledge contained in the Upanishads, the soul as the 'arrow', and the Brahma as the 'target', The Mundak Upanishad 2/2/2-5 stresses the need to focus on Brahma with this magnificent allegory of an archer. (v) The Chandogya uses the allegory of the seed of the tree, the salt in the water, the clod of earth, the shadow in the water, the God-demon war, the fire sacrifice itself etc. to highlight the truth about the Atma and the Brahma. (vi) The Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad uses the example of a wheel (hub-spoke) to describe the relationship between the Atma and the outside world (3/9). (vii) Honey or Madhu has been used as a metaphor for the best and the excellent virtues, and it has been used to expound on great metaphysical truths (Brihad-Aranakya Upanishad, 2/5/1-19). This is called

‘Madhu Vidya’. (viii) Similarly, the Sun is used as a metaphor along with honey in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 3 to elucidate the profoundest principles of metaphysics. These two Vidyas (Madhu and Aditya) are contemplative techniques used in meditation. (ix) The various elementary forces of Nature—the Sun, the Moon, Air, Fire, Water, Earth, Directions etc.—all have been used as metaphors to explain Upanishadic maxim and tenets in Chandogya, canto 2 and 5; and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, canto 2, Brahmin 1, 5; canto 3, Brahmin 7-9; canto 6, Brahmin 2. (x) The Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 1/4 uses the example of a wheel, and 1/5 uses the example of the river to completely explain the concept of this existence. Stunning logic is used to explain complicated and profound metaphysical concepts in a step-by-step method in the Upanishads. (xi) In the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, the wise and brilliantly scholarly sage Yagyavalkya cites the example of the tree as compared to the man to describe the philosophy of death and bring home the point that there must be some intangible, invisible, indisputable and supreme divine authority and power that enables the dead man to take life again when he has been completely reduced to ashes on cremation unlike the tree which when uprooted cannot be reborn (canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 28). Elsewhere in this Upanishad, he uses the instance of the earthworm leaving one leaf or twig to alight on the other to show how the creature leaves one body and enters another (canto 4, Brahmin 4, verse no. 3).

In one of the greatest texts of Advaita Vedanta, the Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 73-99, employs the clever medium of citing some of the most incredulous of things to argue that if any one of them is ever true then there are chances that this world can also be true.

To explain the relationship between Brahm, Atma and body in a simple way, the allegory of the chariot is taken. The body is the chariot, the soul is the true owner, the horses are the sense organs, mind is the bridle, intellect is the charioteer, the two wheels are the physical and spiritual life, and their movement means progress in both fronts. This allusion is sufficient to explain the whole setup. ‘The chariots of God are twenty thousands, even thousands of thousands’ (Psalm, 68/17), where the individual chariot is the creature.

Furthermore, the brightest point in Upanishadic teaching is the fact that a follower of any religious dispensation can benefit from them— they aren’t a set of meaningless rituals and dogmas but proven metaphysical truths that can benefit an afflicted mind-body of an individual because they help him to realise the futility of worldly pursuits, of craving for the world and its material objects which are indeed all perishable in the end. The alternative it prescribes is uplifting for the individual. These doctrines do not come in the way of his day to day work of life but only makes the life better for him to live. To quote Swami Vivekanand—‘Whenever you hear that a certain passage of the Vedas come from a certain Rishi (sages/seers), never think that he wrote it or created it out of his mind; he was the ‘seer’ of the thought which already existed; it existed in the universe eternally. This sage was only the discoverer’. (Complete Works of Swami Vivekanand, 3 (1970)/119.)

The benefit derived from the study of the Upanishad is that the creature realises his true and essential form and nature. He comes to comprehend the essence of the vast cosmos of which he is a part. The resultant awareness fills him with bliss and happiness, contentedness and satisfaction. The Upanishad emphasises the importance

of acquisition of truthful knowledge of the attributeless and infinite, but attainable and absolute Reality and Truth which it calls Brahma. The knowledge of Brahma leaves nothing more to be learnt. 'Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth (i.e., trusts them, implements them), I will take him unto a wise man which (who) built his home upon a rock' (Bible, gospel of St. Matthew, 7/24). Then, such a person becomes 'ye are the light of the world' (Bible, St. Matthew, 5/14), obtains eternal life and bliss— 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish' (Bible, gospel of St. John, 10/28), finds salvation— 'The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants' (psalms, 34/22), and such a person becomes one with the Lord— 'believe me that I am in the father and the father in me' (Bible, gospel of St. John, 14/11). This is the final aim of the Upanishads— to ignite or kindle the process of self-realisation in the seeker/aspirant and lead him to the ultimate Truth and Reality.

The knowledge of the Upanishads frees the creature from the fetters shackling it to this world and provides it with deliverance and liberation even as a bird finds freedom from a cage and flies off into the vast sky. This liberation provides immense joy and exhilaration to the creature because it finds itself liberated much like the caged bird.

Remaining oblivious of the teachings of the Upanishad would be spiritual deprivation of the worst kind for a person walking on the path of spiritual upliftment and enlightenment. The Upanishads are a complete compendium for an enlightened way of life.

The Upanishads are exponents of both the 'Sagun' (formed, manifested, with attributes) as well as the 'Nirgun' (unformed, unmanifested and attributeless) variants of the same entity which the Upanishads prefer to call Brahm. Those Upanishads that are classified, for example, as 'Vaishnav Upanishads', come under the former category because they revolve around various incarnations of Lord Vishnu, while the majority of those that deal with non-dual nature of Brahm, or the Advaitya philosophy, are of the latter category.

How misinterpretation of any preaching or tenet, or even a misconception about the 'truth', can have catastrophic consequences is very beautifully brought forth in the episode relating to Indra, the king of Gods, and Virochan, the king of demons, in canto 8 of Chandogya Upanishad. Similarly we see that knowledge was not the exclusive realm of Brahmins, as many kings were wiser than them as is evident in Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad where we come across one king Ajatshatru and in Maitreyu Upanishad where we have king Brihadrath. Then we have king Janak in whose fire sacrifice sage Yagyavalkya had enunciated great metaphysical truths in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad. Even humble and ordinary birds such as a pelican and a swan had taught sages in Chandogya Upanishad. Not only this, this Upanishad tells us about a humble cart man called Raikwa who was wiser than the pious and enlightened king of the realm.

It would be relevant to quote Swami Vivekanand here; he has said- 'And so many rivers having their source in different mountains roll down, crooked or straight, and at last come into the ocean— so, all these various creeds and religions, taking their start from different stand points and running though crooked or straight courses, at last come into Thee' (Swami Vivekanand, Complete Works, 1 (1970)/390). 'Without knowing him we can neither live nor move, nor have our being; without knowing this

Lord of all, we cannot breathe or live a second' (-do-, Complete Works, 2 (1968)/305). 'It is through the Self that you know anything.... It is in and through the Self that you are known to me, that the whole world is known to me' (-do-, Complete Works, 2 (1968)/305).

The profound importance and significance of the Upanishadic teaching is again highlighted by the Swami, for he says, 'We are taken, as it were, off from the world of the senses, off even from the world of intellect, and brought to that world which can never be comprehended, and yet which is always with us (Swami Vivekananda, Complete Works, 3 (1970)/385).

Swami Vivekananda further says, 'The theme of Vedanta is to see the Lord in everything, to see things in their real nature, not as they appear to be (Complete Works, 2 (1968)/312). Vedanta says that you are pure and perfect, and that there is a state beyond good or evil and that is your own true nature. It is higher than Good. We have no theory of evil... we call it 'ignorance' (Complete Works, 5 (1970)/282).'

The Upanishads advise mankind to turn away from the illusionary and transient benefits that the world appears to offer and instead aspire for spiritual perfection and elevation. The Upanishads' main subject matter is the essential nature of the world, the individual self and the supreme Self and their inter-relationships. The seeker begins to see things in a homogenous way in a different perspective which is rational, empirical and well thought of.

The Upanishads, as we have seen, are based on sound, logical, rational, experienced and empirical thoughts and debates. They do not present any abstract and hypothetical religious dogmas but factual truths that can be verified, truths which are not only irrefutable and empirical but applicable in practice too. Though the language may seem outdated in the present context of the modern world, but gold nevertheless remains gold no matter what dialect is used to name it. They present a body of standard, time-tested knowledge, a knowledge that is in the verifiable realm, empirical experience and rational thoughts.

The so many Upanishadic texts are not meant to confound and confuse the reader or the seeker of the truth in any way, but they only highlight the pluralistic approach of ancient sages to reach a single point called Brahma at the cosmological level (macro level) and the Atma at the temporal level (micro level). The reason for variations in narration is due to the fact that they were conceived and narrated by a long chain of sages and seers over a long period of time and spread over a large and diverse geographical area because they usually used to stay far away from one another, and their message was spread by wandering disciples and minstrels who would obviously employ their own language and style to elucidate and expound what they had learnt from their teachers.

Further, these seers and sages had different personal experiences of the same universal Truth (about Brahma and Atma, about consciousness and life), and therefore they did not hesitate to put forth the Truth as it was revealed to them or as they had understood it. Their personal experiences and the contexts varied, the language used varied, the intellectual caliber of the disciple varied, and the most important factor in so much variation in the narrations of the Upanishads is the fact that this knowledge

was verbally transmitted with no authentic written referral text to be used as standard. Verbal transmission has its own pitfalls, such as its reliance on words and memory besides on the mastery of the narrator on the language and his competence and skills to elucidate and explain the concepts threadbare.

This is also the reason for repetition and overlapping of the texts. Since each teacher had a long chain of disciples who themselves started their own lineage, and since the same teacher had explained the same concept on various occasions, there is bound to be variations; this is very practical and acceptable as long as the facts are not changed and the truth is not tinkered with.

Thus it is seen that the main thrust of the Upanishad is to light the candle of knowledge so as to dispel the darkness of ignorance of the disciple. To do this, a clear, coherent and cogent language and format is used— usually in the form of question and its pertinent answer. This knowledge, which the Upanishad tries to disburse, is about the supreme Truth or absolute Reality which it calls the Brahma, which in turn is treated as being synonymous with the knowledge about the soul/Atma of the creature, the Nature (cosmos, universe, world), the very basic and primary forces that govern the operation of this vast and multifarious cosmos, and the irrefutable truth that everything emerged from and will ultimately collapse into Brahma in the final analysis.

Classification of the Upanishads—There is an Upanishad in Shukla Yajur Veda called ‘Muktikopanishad’. It is a conversation between Sri Ram and Hanuman. According to its verse nos. 26-39 of canto 1, there are total 108 Upanishads. This Upanishad further classifies them in verse nos. 52-57 as follows—(i) Rig Veda’s 10 Upanishads (verse no. 53); (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda’s 19 Upanishads (verse no. 54); (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda’s 32 Upanishads (verse no. 55); (iv) Sam Veda’s 16 Upanishads (verse no. 56) and (v) Atharva Veda’s 31 Upanishads (verse no. 57). In verse no. 27-28 of canto 1 of this Upanishad, it is clearly mentioned that out of the total 108 Upanishads, there are only 10 or at the most 32 main ones, but which ones is not mentioned therein.

This Muktikopanishad also authoritatively settles one pertinent question—that out of the total 210 Upanishads available now, the ones which were originally part of the Vedas are only 108. We can safely assume that the rest (210-108=) 102 might have been later day interjections in the body of the Upanishads as erudite and prodigious sages and seers deemed it fit to further elucidate topics which originally were either not sufficiently explained, were not covered at all or were more focused on one aspect while neglecting the other. As has already been pointed out, the Upanishads were composed over a very long period of time— hundreds of years— we can only make safe assumptions based on some ancient text, and can never be certain.

The Upanishads are repositories of supreme and pristine knowledge. Some of them are short (e.g., Kali-Santarno, Ken, Niralambo, Mandukya etc.) while others are voluminous running into numerous Cantos and sub-Cantos (e.g. Sam Veda’s Chandogya and Maho Upanishads and Shukla Yajur Veda’s Brihad Aranyakya etc.). Some appear to be merely ritualistic and Tantra based (e.g. canto 1 of Saubhaghya Laxmi and Tripuropanishad etc.), some deal with Yoga (meditation, e.g. Cantos 2 and 3 of Saubhaghya Laxmi, Yog Chudamani and Yog Rajo-panishad etc.), some have

various philosophies incorporated in the same text (e.g. Jabal Darshan, Chandogya, Paingal, Subalo etc.), some have exclusive question-answer format (e.g. Kaushitaki Brahmin, Chandogya, Brihad Aranyakya, Prashnopanishad etc.), and some deal with creation (e.g., Mudgal, Aitereyo, Bhavaricho, Chatur Vedo-panishad etc.). Some of the Upanishads are exclusively dedicated to the concept of OM and Naad (e.g. Naadbindu, Amritnaad, Mandukya etc.), some to the concept of the single letter incorporating the whole gamut of creation (e.g. Ekakasharo etc.). Certain Upanishads deal exclusively with the one non-dual transcendental Supreme Being as Brahm (e.g. Brahmo, Brahm Vidya etc.) while others describe this Brahm's different manifestations, called incarnations, in the divine beings such as Lord Ram, Krishna, Narsingh etc. (e.g. Ram Tapini, Krishna Tapini, Narsingh Tapini etc.). Some use the letters of the alphabet as encrypted codes that can unleash the cosmic energy if correctly applied as in the case of Tantra Upanishads which use geometrical instruments to harness the cosmic energy (e.g. Ram Purva Tapini etc.), while others use non-Tantra method to the same effect such as the prayer rosary wherein the beads are symbolically empowered with the divine powers encrypted in the letters (e.g. Akshamaliko etc.).

The Upanishads are also classified according to their patron Gods. Those Upanishads dealing with the various incarnations of Lord Vishnu are called the 'Vaishnav Upanishads', such as Ram Tapini (pertaining to Sri Ram), Gopal Tapini (Lord Krishna), Narsingh Tapini (Lord Narsingh), Narayano (Lord Narayan, Vishnu) etc.; those dealing with Lord Shiva are called 'Shaiv Upanishads', such as Bhavano, Dakshin Murti, Rudro and Sharbho-panishads (pertaining to Lord Shiva), Kalagni Rudra (pertaining to smearing of the sacred ash over the body like Lord Shiva does) and Rudrasha Jabal Upanishad (dealing with the Rudraksha beads worn by Shiva).

Many Upanishads are exclusively dedicated to the worship of 'Devi/Goddess' or the divine cosmic energy which keeps the wheel of creation and destruction running ceaselessly. Some examples are —Tripuro, Saubhagyalaxmi Upanishads of the Rig Veda, Sitopanishad and Devupanishad of the Atharva Veda, Savitri of the Sam Veda and Saraswati Rahasyo-panishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda. An Upanishad is devoted to Lord Ganesh who is regarded as the chief amongst Gods and is invoked first at the beginning of any ritualistic worship or religious ceremony; it is Ganpatu-panishad of the Atharva Veda.

The subject matter or topic can also be used as a criterion for classifying the Upanishad in *broad categories*, though we must be aware of the fact that these categories are not water-tight compartments or chapters of a college text book in as much as many spiritual ideas and different metaphysical and theological concepts are incorporated in any one given Upanishad. All the major Upanishads cover more than one topic when they are primarily focused on a particular subject. They are like a matrix, and a composite picture can only be formed by using the individual mosaic pieces of these Upanishads, as it were. Nevertheless, the main theme or idea in that Upanishad can help us in broad categorization. Let us see how it works—

(a) The Upanishads dealing with the concepts of 'Sanyas' are the following—(i) Rig Veda Upanishads:--Nirvano; (ii) Sam Veda Upanishads:--Arunu, Maitreyunu, Kundiko and Sanyaso; (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads:--Jabalo, Turiyatito, Paramhanso, Bhikshuko, Yagyavalko, Shatyayani, Subalo (canto 12-13) and

Niralambo; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads:--Avadhuto and Kathrudro; and (v) Atharva Veda Upanishads:--Narad Parivrajak and Paramhans Parivrajak.

(b) Yoga and Samadhi—(i) Rig Veda Upanishads:--Saubhagya-laxmi; (ii) Sam Veda Upanishads:--Jabal Darshan, Mahopanishad (canto 6) and Yog Chudamani; (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads:--Mandal-brahmin, Advaitarak, Hansa and Trishikhi-brahmin; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads:--Amrit Naad, Kshuriko, Yogshikha, Brahm Vidya, Yogtattva, Shwetashwatar, Akshu, Dhyanbindu and Yogkundalini; and (v) Atharva Veda Upanishads:-- Shandilyo.

(c) Creation—(i) Rig Veda Upanishads:--Aiterio-panishad; Mudgalo-panishad, Canto 2-4; (ii) Sam Veda Upanishads:--Chandogyo-panishad, Canto 3, Section 19; Canto 4, Section 17, verse nos. 1-3; Canto 6, Section 2-10; (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads:--Trishikhi Brahmin, Canto 1; Painglo-panishad, in its Canto 1 and Canto 2, verse no. 1-10; Subalo-panishad, Canto 1-2; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahmin 1-2, 4-5; Canto 6, Brahmin 4; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads:--Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 4; Taittiriyo-panishad, Valli (Canto) 2, Anuvak (sub-canto) 2 and 6.

(d) Brahm and Atma—(i) Rig Veda Upanishads:--Kaushitaki-brahmin and Atma-prabodho; (ii) Sam Veda Upanishads:--Jabalu, Maitreyu, Maitrayanu, Chandogya and Keno; (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads:--Adhyatmo, Ishavasya, Niralambo, Subalo, Hanso, Mantriko and Brihad Aranyaka; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads:--Brahmo, Brahm-vidya, Brahm-bindu, Katho, Kaivalya, Ekaksho, Taitireyo and Shwetashwatar; (v) Atharva Veda Upanishads:--Atmo, Atharvashikhar, Mahavakyo, Mundako and Pashupat-brahmu.

(e) The great sayings—Painglo of the Shukla Yajur Veda; Mahavakyo of the Atharva Veda; Shukar-rahasyo of the Krishna Yajur Veda, amongst others.

(f) The concept of OM—This is a topic covered by almost all the Upanishads dealing with Brahm and cosmic Naad as well as Yoga. But Mandukyo-panishad of the Atharva Veda is exclusively dedicated to it. Similarly, the Upanishads dealing with Yoga describe the hearing of the cosmic sound called 'Naad' by an ascetic submerged in meditation. The Naad-bindu, Dhyan Bindu and Hansopanishad are some of the texts that elaborately describe this OM in the context of the cosmic vibrations which represent the cosmic energy at the core of creation and its running.

(g) Uniformity in creation—Niralambo Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda as well as Brahmo and Skando of the Krishna Yajur Veda are more emphatic on this subject which is a constant refrain of all the Upanishads that deal with Atma, creature and Brahm.

(h) Classification of society in four segments and its utility and reason have been explained in Ashramo-panishad of the Atharva Veda, while Vajrasuchiko of the Sam Veda tells us who is a true Brahmin. Various Vedantic concepts such as Jiva and Parmatma, Vidya and Avidya, fetters and liberation, the 4 states of existence, the 5 Koshas, Maya and Vrittis etc. are explained in Sarwasaro-panishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda. The concept of chanting Lord's divine name in unison (called Kirtan) is described in Kalisantarno; the importance and significant of the beads of the prayer

rosary is highlighted in Akshamaliko-panishads of the Rig Veda; and Sun worship in Suryu-panishad of the Atharva Veda.

(i) The Upanishads also cover medical field. As is well known, Yoga is a great way of keeping fit. Besides the Upanishad which deal with Yoga and meditation (see s. no. 'b' above), there is a Garudo-panishad in Atharva Veda which describes the antidote to poisons (e.g., snake bite) and Chakshusho Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tell us about cures for eye diseases.

(j) All the major Upanishad dealing with theology and metaphysics are in a question and answer format, and some of the typical Upanishads which can be cited to illustrate the point are Prashno-panishad of the Atharveda, Brihad Aranakya of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Mahopanishad and Chandogya of the Sam Veda, and Kaushitaki-brahmin of the Rig Veda.

(k) Certain Upanishads deal a crushing blow to those fanatical bigots who fight each other in the name of religion— e.g., Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda establishes that there is no difference between Vishnu and Shiva, while Bhavano-panishad of the Atharva Veda tells us the uniformity between Shiva and Shakti. This is besides the umpteen numbers of other Upanishads that tell us about the non-dual nature of the Atma and Brahm, of the Atma and creation, and the Brahm and creation.

There are other criterions that can be used to broadly classify the Upanishads according to the major topic or subject matter they deal with, or the aspect of spiritual practice they lay emphasis upon, e.g.—(i) Vaishnav Upanishads which deal with the worship of the various incarnations of Lord Vishnu as well as the philosophical and metaphysical aspect of each such incarnation (Garudopanishad, Gopal Tapiniyopanishad, Ramopanishad etc.); (ii) Devi or Shakti Upanishads deal with the worship and significance of various forms of the cosmic mother called Devi representing the cosmic energy and creative principle which is at the base of the entire edifice of the cosmos (Laxmikopanishad, Devupanishad, Tripuropanishad, Bhavaricho etc.); (iii) Shiva Upanishads deal with Lord Shiva and his various manifestations and their worship and spiritual significance (Rudraksha-Jabal, Rudra Hridaya, Shivo-panishad etc.); (iv) Purely metaphysical and philosophical Upanishads dealing with the various aspects of Brahm, Atma, how to convert the day to day life into a fount of bliss and emancipation etc. (Mahopanishad, Chandogya, Brihad Aranakya etc.); (v) Purely ritualistic based Upanishads (Tripuropanishad, Ram Purva etc.); (vi) Some Upanishads derive their name from the saint, sage, seer or ascetic who first enunciated them or to whom they are dedicated (Jabalopanishad by sage Jabal, Shukar Rahasyopanishad by sage Shukdeo, Yagyavalkya Upanishad by sage Yagyavalkya etc.); (vii) Some which are based on symbolism (Bhavanopanishad, Akshamalikopanishad etc.); (viii) Upanishads dealing with Yoga practices and principles (Yogachudamani and Kundalupanishad, canto 2 and 3 of Saubhagya Laxmi etc.); (ix) Upanishads describing the origin of the cosmos (Chatur Vedopanishad, Aitereyopanishad, Mudgalopanishad, Bhavanopanishad etc.); (x) Upanishads dealing with the importance of the rosary and its various beads (Rudraksha Jabalopanishad, Akshamalikopanishad etc.); (xi) Worshipping of the various aspects of nature and seeing Brahm in all the creation (Chandogya etc.); (xii) The detailed explanation of the 'Great Sayings' of the Vedas called the Mahavakyas (Shukar Rahasyopanishad;

Paingalo 1/1-12, 2/1-5, 3/2; Mandal Brahmin 2/2/5, 2/4/4, 3/1/6, 3/2/1, 3/2/2; Atma Bodho; Atmo; Kaivalyo, verse no. 16 etc.); (xiii) Upanishad describing the cosmic 'Naad' (Naadbindu, Amrit Naad etc.), and the list can never be exhaustive because of the pluralistic approach of the vast array of metaphysical topics that the Upanishads cover.

The teachings of the Upanishads can be broadly grouped, inter alia, under the following heads—Brahm as the ultimate cause and conclusion of creation; nature of Brahm and its counterpart as the Atma; what constitutes 'truth' and what was 'falsehood'; the evolution of this world, the philosophical dimension of the cycle of birth and death, and how to break free from it or overcome it and attain final liberation; the characteristic features and virtues of this visible as well as invisible world in its entirety; what was ignorance, what was delusions, and what were their consequences upon the individual creature's life and future; nature of the living being as individual souls; the mutual relationship between this individual being and Brahm; the involvement of the living being in this world and the causes as well as the process of transmigration; the ultimate goal of life, its nature and ways to attain it; the nature, characteristic attributes and definition of the one non-dual Truth that is irrefutable, unequivocal, indivisible, steady, universal and uniform. This is achieved by great deal of research in the enigmatic realm of the esoteric and mystical Brahm and the Soul by a fearless spirit to know the reality with an enthusiastic spiritual zeal. The result arrived at and the conclusions drawn were very astounding and had profound impact on the thinking that followed such research. These invariably lead to the establishment of one Truth which was an indivisible unit, the concept of non-duality of the consciousness whether as the Atma or as the Brahm.

The message of the Upanishads finds a parallel in the **Holy Bible** also. The purpose and importance of truthful knowledge about the 'Reality and Essence' of everything which the Upanishads strive to enumerate and expose in detail is also succinctly proclaimed by the Bible at numerous places, for instance—(i) Fools die for want of wisdom (Proverb, 19/2), (ii) They know not, neither will they understand, they walk on in darkness (Psalm, 82/5), (iii) They will be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall in the ditch (Gospel of St. Matthew, 15/14), (iv) (Therefore), understanding is a wellspring of life (Proverbs, 2/6), (v) The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge (Proverb, 15/14), (vi) By knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches (Proverb, 24/4), (vii) Your testimonies are also my delight, and my counselors (Psalm, 119/24), (viii) Through your precepts I get understanding (Psalm, 119/104).

The fruit of knowledge according the Holy Bible is—(i) For the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth (Ephesians, 5/9), (ii) Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace (Job 20/21). [Really indeed! This last quotation is the real fruit of self-realisation and is affirmed emphatically by the Upanishads.] The Bible further says:--(i) The Lord is my light and my salvation (psalm, 27/1), (ii) God is light and in him there is no darkness at all (St. John, 1/1/5), (iii) The Lord is a God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed (1 Samuel, 2/3), and where is this God? The Bible says, (iv) The kingdom of God is within you (Gospel of St. Luke, 17/21), (v) In him we live and move and have our being (Acts, 17/28).

Regarding this ‘truth’ factor, the Bible says— (i) I am the way, the truth, and the life (gospel of St. John, 14/6), (ii) Send out thy light and thy truth. Let them lead me (psalm 43/3), (iii) Thy word is the truth (gospel of St. John 17/17). (iv) The truth is great unto the clouds (psalms, 57/10), (v) That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (Gospel of St. John, 1/9), (vi) Teach me your way, o Lord, I will walk in your truth (Psalm, 86/11). Understanding the truth is the wellspring of life unto him that hath it; the Lord giveth wisdom. Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding (Proverb, 2/6). Send out thy light and thy truth and let them lead me (we have seen, are based on sound, logical, rational, experienced and empirical Proverb, 43/3). Thy word is Truth (St. John, 17/17).

Life is as long as well as a short journey. Long in the sense that a man gets ample time to do what is expected or required of him, and short because it has to be done without any waste of time, without running aimlessly hither and thither, frittering precious moments away. We have to be laser-focused on our target in order to optimize the limited time frame that we have for the wheel of time is running at a fast pace. The Lord is the only target worth seeing, worth talking about, worth reading, worth contemplating upon, worth dreaming and worth writing about as far as I am concerned. That is the reason the Lord God Sri Ram, who is synonymous with Brahma for me, has got his Upanishads rendered into English at my hands. For me, this is the remedy that gives peace and tranquility to my heart. Amongst so many alternatives available in the chemist’s shop, this is the remedy that suits me and I hope it will suit all the devotees of the Lord too. It helps me to remember my beloved Ram who is the very axle, the very pivot, the very basis, the very strength and the very energy that runs the wheel of Nature in my view (and in the form of Brahma in the language of the Upanishads). And, is it not a great honour, a great privilege rather, to be able to do the Lord’s work?

And to do the Lord’s work, I decided to write in English so that the barrier of language is broken and the wisdom of the Upanishads can ride the waves of the high seas and spread to all corners of the globe because English is an international language—‘I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice (books) I might teach (reach) others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown (alien) tongue’ (Bible, Corinthians, 1/14/9-11, 19).

‘I am not capable of anything. If He graciously accepts me, if He mercifully and benevolently empowers my eyes to see His divine form which is most beautiful, enthralling and incomparable in my own Atma or my pure-self (which is pure consciousness), I shall then consider my self as most blessed, most privileged, most obliged, most thankful and most fulfilled’ (Kathopanishad, 1/2/22).

But let us remember one point, and that is whatever has been written in this book are not a word of mine, ‘My doctrine is not mine, but ‘His’ that sent me; if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine; for he that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh ‘His’ glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him’ (Bible, Gospel of St. John, 7/17-18). ‘The words that I have spoken to you do not come from me. The father who remains in me does his work’ (Gospel. St. John, 14/10), ‘What I say, then, is what the father has told me to say’ (Gospel. St. John, 12/50). What more can I say.

I humbly present this book to my esteemed readers with a sincere request to excuse me for the errors of omission and commission, and this request is out of the depths of my heart. At the same time, I ask forgiveness from my beloved Lord Ram for all my in competencies and childishness by submitting before Him—‘Oh Lord! I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know’ (Bible, Job 42/2), but ‘must I not heed to speak what the Lord has put in my mouth?’ (Bible, Numbers 23/12), for ‘the Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue (when I spoke what I said)’ (Bible, 2 Samuel 23/2).

I write these books as a means of my thanksgiving to my Lord—‘Oh! Give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples’ (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/8). For this purpose, I—‘Sing Psalms to Him; talk all His wondrous works! Glory in His holy name. Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord! Seek the Lord and his strength, seek His face everyone. Remember His marvelous works which He has done; His wonders and the judgments of His mouth’ (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/8-12).

Through these holy books written by me on His behest and as His pen, I ‘Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among Nations and His wonders among peoples. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised’ (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/23-25), for ‘Honour and majesty are before Him; strength and gladness are in His place’ (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/27).

I dedicate this book to Lord Ram who is my dearest of dear, my most beloved, the essence and purpose of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated. I am short of words to pray to my Lord Ram who is ‘The Lord, the Lord God, the merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin’. (Bible, Exodus, 34/6-7.)

My heart springs out like a fountain of joy and ecstasy when I recall the following lines from the sacred texts of the Holy Bible—‘So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, ‘I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God. You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who *love* you and observe Your commandments. Please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before you now, day and night’. (Bible, the Book of Nehemiah, 1/ 4-5.)

Before concluding finally, I wish to express my sincere feelings of deep and overwhelming gratitude for my beloved Lord Ram for whose love and service I have embarked on this adventurous journey, and I wish to thank the Lord from the deepest recesses of my heart for everything the Lord has done for me, by humbly offering this short prayer quoting directly from the Holy Bible, for I have no word of my own that would sufficiently express my emotions like those of the Holy Word of God as follows herein below—

‘Therefore, I will give thanks to you, Oh Lord—and sing praises to your name’ (Bible, 2 Samuel 22/50). ‘I rejoice in my Lord and am convinced that ‘the Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; the God of my strength, in Him I will trust (who

is) my shield and the horn of my salvation, (who is) my stronghold and my refuge, (who is) my saviour---I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so I shall be saved---' (Bible, 2 Samuel 22/2-4).

'In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God. He heard my voice---and my cry entered his ears' (Bible, 2 Samuel 22/7). 'He brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me' (Bible, 2 Samuel 22/20). And 'You have also given me the shield of your salvation, and your gentleness has made me great. You enlarged my path under me, so my feet did not slip' (Bible, 2 Samuel 22/36-37). So, 'the Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock (of my emancipation and salvation, my liberation and deliverance). Let God be exalted, the Rock of my salvation' (Bible, 2 Samuel 22/47).

And, how the redeemed Spirit yearns to meet the Lord? Well, the answer is—'For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand (by me) at last on earth, and after my skin is destroyed (and I am dead by the body), this I know that in my flesh (Spirit) I shall see my God (Lord Ram), whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold and not another. How my heart yearns within me!' (Bible, Job 19/25-27). For has it not been said—'The Lord is within you while you are with him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you' (Bible, 2 Chronicles 15/2). 'But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you; who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done all this, in whose hand is the life of every thing, and the breath of all mankind?' (Bible, Job 12/7-10).

'You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill'. (Bible, Psalm, 3/3-4.) 'Now, therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me Your way, *that I may know You* and that I may find grace in Your sight'. (Bible, Exodus, 33/13). The Lord said, 'My presence will go with you, and *I will give you rest*'. (Bible, Exodus, 33/14). He (Moses) said, 'Please show me Your glory'. (Bible, Exodus, 33/18). The Lord replied, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will be compassionate to whom I will have compassion'. (Bible, Exodus, 33/19).

'How long, O Lord, will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long will I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Lest my enemy say, 'I have prevailed against him'; lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved. But *I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord; because He has dealt bountifully with me*'. (Bible, Psalm 13.)

'Hear a just cause my Lord; attend to my cry; give ear to my prayer that is not from deceitful lips. Let my vindication come from Your presence; let Your eyes look on things that are upright. You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. I have kept myself from the path of the destroyer. Uphold my steps in Your paths; that my footsteps may not slip. I have called upon You for You will hear

me, O God. Incline Your ear to me and hear my speech. Show Your marvelous loving kindness by Your right hand; O You who save those who *trust in You*. *Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings.*’ (Bible, Psalm, 17/1-8.)

‘The Lord redeems the soul of his servants and none of those who trust in him shall be condemned’. (Bible, Psalm 34/22). So, help me, oh Lord! ‘The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart trusted in him and I am helped. Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise him’. (Bible, Psalm, 28/7). ‘To the end that my glory may sing praise to you and not be silent. Oh Lord my God, I will give thanks to you for ever’. (Bible, Psalm 30/12).

‘And rejoice in the Lord, you righteous one, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holy name (Psalm 97/12). Exalt in the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill, for the Lord our God is holy (Psalm 99/9). ‘Finally, my bretheren, rejoice in the Lord’ (Bible, Philippians, 3/1).

I wish to once again thank the Lord God of all—‘Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever’ (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/34).

Amen!

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ANTHOLOGY OF THE PRINCIPAL UPANISHADS OF THE SHUKLA YAJUR VEDA

CHAPTER—1

ISHAVASYA-UPANISHAD

It is the 40th canto of Shukla Yajur Veda Sanhita. It is regarded as 1st Upanishad of this Veda and is of great metaphysical importance. The first 39 chapters of this Veda deal with religious rituals. This Upanishad elucidates on the essential principle postulates about divinity. It derives its name from the very first two words with which it starts—‘Ishavasyam’, which means-‘the supreme Lord resides in’, or ‘the supreme Lord pervades in’. The word ‘Isha’ means the ‘supreme Lord of the creation who is the ultimate Authority that rules over the entire kingdom’, here referring to the supreme transcendental Brahm, and ‘Vashya’ which means-‘the place where he resides or the realm or domain over which he has sway’. This name in itself sums up its contents—it unequivocally establishes the irrefutable fact that Brahm pervades throughout the creation uniformly, and without any distinction between any two entities in the creation. The supreme Lord is the soul and spirit of the entire creation in the form of its Atma. This short but great Upanishad has 18 Mantras (or verses) having profound metaphysical truths enshrined in them.

This Upanishad stresses the need to worship the supreme Lord, the Brahm, everywhere, in all forms of the creation, in every action and deed, selflessly and with the higher objective of spiritual upliftment, rather than to seek worldly glories and benefits. It emphasises the fact that one should treat all his deeds as a form of worship of that Lord, as an offering to that Lord. This ensures that each action of a creature will automatically become righteous and auspicious leading to his all round welfare.

The supreme Brahm has innumerable glorious virtues and characteristics; he is, inter alia, almighty, all-pervading, omnipresent, immanent, omniscient, eternal, supreme, eclectic and transcendental; it surrounds the creation from all sides, forming its outer parameter while at the same time inherently present in it as its integral part. . It is like the dazzling, splendourous Sun and the Fire-God. The creature’s Atma is that Brahm personified, and therefore the former has all the glories of the latter. This supreme Brahm rules over the movable as well as the immovable world; he lives in it as its Atma.

This divine realisation removes all causes of confusions and doubts created by the misleading concept of duality and the consequent dichotomy leading to perplexities and schisms which in turn robs the creature of his peace and tranquility of mind. With this hurdle out of the way, bliss and felicity of Brahm realisation is attained easily. Worship becomes easy because each deed that a man does becomes an offering to the Lord and his worship.

Refer also Niralambo Upanishad which is Chapter 8 of this volume.

-----Shanti path-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath

1. OM salutations! Whatever exists in this entire creation (universe), animate as well as inanimate, is pervaded throughout and completely soaked by the divine entity

known as 'Isha' or the supreme Lord of creation. He is known as 'Ishwar'. This fact should be borne in mind, or one must be wise enough to realise that nothing in this world exists that is not a manifestation of the supreme Brahm or Ishwar. Consequentially, one should do all the designated duties of the world and enjoy them with a sense of complete detachment and dispassion. One should not be mentally engrossed in or infatuated with anything because all these objects of pleasure and gratification belong to no one (because they are deluding in nature and created by the deluding powers of the mind.)[1]

[Note—This verse answers one fundamental question—'Where does the Lord reside; what is his habitat? The answer is 'he is all pervading and omnipresent. The Lord resides in the whole creation uniformly as its Atma, as its soul. Therefore, one should not search for the Lord anywhere else other than the very world where one lives. One has only to change one's perceptions of it to realise that Lord here itself.

The word 'Isha' means one who rules over all others, who is the Lord of all, who is the ultimate authority, and supreme in all respects. That authority is Brahm and it has manifested itself as the Atma or soul of the creation, both the animate as well as the inanimate. To be very close to his subjects and be easily accessible to them individually, to ensure that they can be properly governed and controlled, the Lord decided to assume an atomic form of their Atma and reside in their bosom. So, this whole world is in the control of Brahm in the form of the Atma.

This Atma is, inter alia, almighty, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, all-pervading and all-encompassing; it is a fount of all auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness, blissfulness and pristine purity. Since the Lord is so auspicious, omnipresent, glorious and divine, one should always remember him while going about one's worldly chores. One should have the notion that whatever he is doing is a form of service to the Lord and is being done for him; all the deeds are done for him, on his orders, and on his behalf.

Since the creation belongs to the Lord and not to the creature who is merely a humble servant of the Lord, there is no question for the creature of exercising ownership over any fraction, however tiny and inconsequential, of the creation that does not belong to him. This conviction and faith that everything belongs to the Lord removes the basis of all worldly attachments, greed and yearnings, for a man has no right to 'eye' something that does not belong to him.

Again, since he is working for his Lord, he should be diligent and sincere in all his activities and treat them as a form of worship of the soul or Atma, because all his activities pertaining to this world make him serve Brahm—who is present as the Atma of all the creatures in the world—in one way or the other.

With this eclectic, holistic and divine approach, one should, for instance, do all religious sacrifices, create wealth, raise a family, do business, acquire various skills, learn the scriptures and the vast body of knowledge they contain etc., but only as a means of serving the supreme and divine Lord and his various forms in the way of this creation. A person should not do anything with selfish motive, or with attachment to it, and expecting to gain personal benefit from it. Hence, one should not be unduly concerned about worldly assets; rather he should cultivate the Atma which is the real asset in the world.

'Everything belongs to the Lord'—this firm belief creates dispassion and detachment from the world. After all, which man in his right senses would greed for assets that belong to someone who is as powerful as the

almighty Lord of the creation? It is wiser for him to be in the good books of the Lord by serving him better and honestly because then he would be the de-facto master of the realm, as it were! That is why realised souls, such as great saints and pious sages, had such mystical powers that even emperors bowed before them.]

2. One should desire to live in this world for a hundred years all the while doing his deeds dispassionately as sanctioned by the scriptures (and treating them as his offering to Ishwar, or the quintessential supreme Lord who is the Lord of the whole creation). In this way, the deeds done by you (the man) shall not cling to you (i.e. the deeds will not cast their good or bad effects upon the doer of those deeds simply because they are being done with the doer mentally convinced that he has not done them; he is not intellectually and mentally committed to these deeds; or they are done without his claiming any rights over the fruits of those deeds).¹ There is no other way by which a man can free himself from the bondage created by the deeds.[2]

[Note-¹ When a man thinks that he is a doer of a certain deed, he gets emotionally attached at least to its results; he expects that his efforts would be successful and produce the desired results for which he had initiated those actions or deeds in the first place. This sets off a chain reaction; it's like setting the cat free amongst the pigeons. But when a man distances himself from the deeds or actions, he does them simply as his duty, and in a fashion which is proper and has sanctity from the scriptures, because he has no vested interest in it. He will automatically shy away from unrighteous deeds. When he thinks and is convinced that what he is doing is a form of worship and an offering to his Lord, each of his actions acquire a special and sublime meaning for him. He does them with enthusiasm and with a pure heart as if he was doing his regular worship. It provides a divine experience to him, which elevates his soul instead of denigrating it if the same deed was done with worldly passions and expectations of a good result, because then they create restlessness and anxiety. If the deed is successful, a sense of elation and joy follows, while if it fails, dejection, desperation, frustration and gloom takes over. None of these is conducive to peace, serenity and tranquility of mind.

In essence, this verse exhorts the spiritual aspirant to spend his entire life in the service of the Lord. A wise person must think that each action of his, each deed of his is an offering to the religious fire sacrifice; it is a humble oblation to the almighty Lord. This secret behind the conception of 'doing deeds while not getting attached to them, or not allowing the deeds to get the better of him' is unraveled here. One should do deeds as a matter of duty, without getting worked up about them in any way. He should treat them as a service to the supreme Lord, and his manifestation as this creation and its creatures. With this eclectic and divine notion, one need not do separate religious rituals repeatedly, because the whole life of such a wise man becomes one big sacrifice. After all, the intention and purpose of any sacrifice is to serve the Lord and honour him. If it can be done without any additional hassle, it is all the better for the creature. Obviously, mere formality of going through the elaborate rituals, without being aware of the real meaning of 'worship', would reduce the ritual to a farce; they would be a sham. Therefore, there is no better way to be freed from the fetters represented by worldly deeds and their chain of consequences that shackle a creature to this world than to offer everything to the Lord and serve him along with his myriad creation, which is only the different ways in which he has revealed himself, selflessly.

The period of 100 years refers to the four segments of twenty-five years each into which the entire life of a man has been divided by the ancient sages. These are called *Ashrams* — (a) *Brahmacharya* — this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) *Grihastha* — when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called *Grihastha Ashram* which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems, (c) *Vaanprastha* — this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) *Sanyas* — this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation.]

3. The various famous abodes of the 'Asurs' (i.e. literally those who are non-Gods, or those who possess qualities and virtues that are inauspicious, unrighteous, sinful, pervert and degrading) are in the form of inferior or lower-grade worlds which are like hells covered by darkness representing all the negative qualities collectively called 'Tamas'.¹ Those who literally 'kill the Atma' become ghosts who inhabit such horrible abodes, and this they continue to do repeatedly². [3]

[Note—¹A creature has *three types of qualities*—'Sata' is the best quality signifying righteousness and nobility of thought and action; 'Raj' is the medium quality creating worldly desires and passions; and 'Tama' is the meanest and lowest of the three, creating a tendency to commit sin, be evil and pervert, to be impelled towards misdeeds and unrighteousness. Such persons are like blind people who keep putting their feet at the wrong places each time they take a step.

²The term *killers of the Atma* is a figure of speech to indicate those people who do not realise the exalted stature of the entity known as the Atma. They are unaware about what has been postulated in verse no. 1 and 2 above. They are deluded and oblivious of the fact that this world is a manifestation in which the supreme Lord or Brahm is latently present as its integral constituent part. They continue to think 'I have done this and that; this is the fruit of my efforts and therefore I have the exclusive right to enjoy these fruits; I can refuse its benefits to others'. They remain emotionally and mentally tied to their deeds, and therefore have to suffer their consequences. They never get peace and happiness. They never find liberation from their self-created web of endless worries and perplexities, miseries and torments. Such people not only spend their life in vain but also stifle their Atma to death; they strangle their free spirit and prevent it from escaping from the cage of this body and find

freedom from its bondage. They wish to keep the body so as to enable them to enjoy the world and its sensual pleasures and material comforts. They can never find 'Mukti', or liberation and deliverance from it.

Hence, those persons who remain engrossed in gratifying their sense organs and remain engrossed in pursuing the comforts and pleasures of this entrapping, deluding and artificial world are actually stifling their Atma/soul and preventing it from breathing and getting uplifted. This is because the 'Tama' qualities are very gross and heavy on the soul; they bog it down, act as a drag on its upliftment. It's tantamount to killing the Atma even as preventing a serious and intelligent student from pursuing his higher education by creating so many hurdles in his path is akin to killing his drive to learn, which is tantamount to killing or stifling his spirit by obstructing his academic progress and undermining his career as a wise and educated individual. What use is the life of a student if his aspirations are forced to be crushed under foot, a bright future ruined, and he is compelled to lead a life like an illiterate person? Similarly, by engrossing oneself in pursuing the world, one practically kills the exalted Atma. The willful stepping into the bog represented by this false and entrapping world prevents the creature from getting freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Since this world is dominated by Tamas qualities and is therefore sorrowful, remaining in it can never give peace to the soul. The Atma remains roaming in it like a ghost that has not found peace.]

4. [The following verses enumerate the attributes or qualities which are special and exclusive to 'Ishwar'--] 'He' is stable, he is the only one, he has swiftness which surpasses the agility of the mind, he was present before anything came into being(existence), i.e. he existed in the beginning, he is an embodiment of Gyan (truthful knowledge, enlightenment, wisdom and erudition), he is all-pervading, omnipresent, omniscient and all-knowing, he is beyond the comprehension of even the Gods such as Indra etc., he can overtake others who are running fast even though he does run or move himself a bit, and it's by relying upon his powers and authority that the various Gods such as the Wind-God are successfully able to do deeds such as producing rain and enabling the mortal creature to have life, to live and bear the Pran(the spark of life and the vital winds that sustain life in a creature).[4]

[Note—Verse no. 1 and 2 have expounded on the basic nature of the supreme Lord who pervades the whole creation from within and without. He is the only authority worthy of adoration and reverence. He is the only one who can be worshipped. 'There is no God but one God', it essentially says. Then verse no.3 warns about the hellish consequences for not heeding this advice. Now verse no. 4 to 8 expound upon the stupendously magnificent and glorious virtues and characteristics of that Lord. Some of the Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda that elaborately describe some of the Lord's virtues and glories are the following:--(a) Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, chapter 2; (b) Subalo-panishad, chapter 6; (c) Mantriko-panishad, chapter 7; (d) Niralambo-panishad, chapter 8; and (e) Adhyatmo-panishad, chapter 15.]

5. He (the supreme Lord of the creation) walks or moves about at will anywhere he wishes, and at the same time, he does not walk or move about anywhere¹. He is further away from the farthest point, but at the same time, he is nearer than the nearest point at any given time². He pervades this whole cosmos or universe from within and

without. He is present uniformly and universally inside the world, encompasses it or surrounds it from the outside, and is present even beyond its limit³. [5]

[Note—This verse is a typical example of the paradox presented by the creation—‘this as well as that; neither this nor that’. We find three sets of opposites here; now let us examine them one by one.

¹The Lord walks and does not walk at the same time—such a stupendous feat can be achieved by someone who has powers which are phenomenal, supernatural and beyond comprehension. This is the very reason that ‘Ishwar’ is called the ‘supreme Lord’ of all. There are certain divine characteristics, majestic authorities and supernatural and mystical powers that are exclusively possessed by him and no one else. This is the majesty and glory of him who is incomprehensible. These contradictions, though appearing to be outlandish on the surface, are indeed feasible, possible and verifiable even in our day to day life—for example, we have a magnet. Its south and north poles are diametrically opposite in their magnetic powers, but they co-exist in the same piece of magnet. Life and death, construction and destruction, night and day—all coexist in this world.

Another connotation of ‘moving and not moving’ is this—when the invisible and imperceptible Lord manifests himself as an incarnation on the earth, he moves around like an ordinary creature or a human being, but at the macro level, he remains serene, detached, tranquil, equanimous and quiet; he is unmoving and unwavering.

²Similarly, the supreme, transcendental Lord, though being all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent everywhere, is so miniscule and subtle that he cannot be perceived, seen or observed by non-believers, or by those who lack spiritual insight, or are not wise and enlightened enough. The same Lord can be easily perceived, experienced, witnessed, observed and realised by those who are wise and enlightened, as well as by his ordinary devotees who can realise the Lord by their tearful and earnest prayer. Also, since Brahm and Atma are one, and Atma resides in the bosom of every creature, the Lord is very near to all of us, while trying to measure him or know him by logic and debate is as futile as trying to drink the water of the whole ocean!

³The third mysterious attribute of the Lord is that he is present inside as well as outside. This is quite easy to understand if we take the example of an earthen pot. The space or air present inside the cavity of the pot is the same as the one outside it. The space also fills the minute pores of the pot. When the pot is broken, the two spaces merge indistinguishably with one another, leaving no trace of any earlier deceptive distinction that existed between the space present inside and outside the body of the pot. So is the essential case with Brahm or the supreme Lord. Since he is immanent, all-pervading and all-encompassing, he is present both within and without everything.

Further, this illustration also explains the above two attributes of the Lord—when we move the pot from one place to another, the space inside it also moves along, but the space outside remains where it was though there is no difference between the two spaces. Similarly, the space within the cavity of the pot is within our reach, but the space in the far corner of the atmosphere cannot be touched by our hands while standing on the surface of the earth, what to talk of the far reaches of the cosmos. So, Brahm is near as well as far from us, as it were.

The basic idea in this verse is the fact that man made logic and rationale cannot be made applicable to an entity that is beyond

comprehension of the intellect of a mortal creature's thinking capabilities. No one should disregard the greatness of his father for the simple reason that had it not been for the father, the man would not have been here in the first place to question the greatness of the father! It is because of the father that a man is born. Similarly, it is because of the cosmic father that we are here to enjoy the world; we should not sweep this fact under the carpet in our enthusiasm to pretend to appear to be intelligent and rational in our thinking and outlook. We must realise that there is some stupendously powerful authority that governs all the physical forces of Nature. There is much to be learnt for us before we can say 'I know'. And when that knowledge dawns, there will be no need to teach 'who' and 'what' is Brahm; this is Brahm realisation and true enlightenment.]

6. Hence, once a person acquires wisdom and begins to constantly see all the individual creatures of the creation as being inherently and subtly present in a microcosmic form in the supreme, transcendental, macrocosmic divine Being (i.e. are able to visualise the invisible Brahm in the composite form of the visible world), and at the same time see that supreme Lord as being inherently present in a subtle form as an integral part of all the individual creatures (as their Atma), he never hates anyone or has any kind of ill-will, malice, jealousy and animosity with them.[6].

[Note—This is an obvious extension of what has been said in the previous verse nos.1 and 5. The supreme Lord, here represented by the Atma, is present everywhere; he pervades everything. That Lord revealed himself as the Atma of each and every part of creation. The entire creation is the Lord's body, while the Atma of each individual being is the microcosmic form of the macrocosmic Soul of the divine Lord. Upanishads have persistently emphasised the 'non-dual' nature of creation vis-à-vis the supreme Brahm. A wise, erudite, enlightened and self-realised man understands the import of the three fundamental principles—that the divine Atma is his true identity, that the same divine Atma which resides in him also resides uniformly in the rest of the creation, and that this Atma is the supreme, transcendental, glorious and almighty Brahm personified. Then it is easy to infer the meaning of this verse—a man becomes jealous of others, but how can a man hate and be jealous of his own self, especially when he realises that his 'self' is not the body but the Atma which is a manifestation of the Lord. If that is the case, how can he logically be hateful and jealous of others when he has already realised the fact that the Atma living in him also lives in the other person; this makes the other person as dear to him as his own self.

The natural corollary of this holistic approach and eclectic perception of creation is freedom from fear, for from whom shall a man fear when he has no enemy, when all are alike for him, and when his love and generous behaviour has even made those who had any kind of ill will against him retrace their steps and refrain from harming one who is a friend of all.]

7. In that realised and erudite state of enlightenment, when an exalted person becomes acquainted with and convinced of the truth about that supreme, transcendental Lord (that he pervades the entire creation uniformly and universally), all the creatures then become an image of that Supreme Being for him. In that exalted and enlightened state of mind when that person witnesses the Lord everywhere in a non-dual form (i.e. when he sees no distinction between the supreme, almighty, macrocosmic Lord, and

the humble, meek and microcosmic individual because both are an image of one another), what delusions and doubts, what confusions and consternations remain for him? [That is, no attachments or infatuations would affect him, and therefore there will be no cause for sorrows, sufferings and grief on separation from his dear ones, or jealousy and hatred due to worldly mundane causes. He goes beyond such lowly, denigrating, misplaced and ignorance-based emotions. Consequentially, he attains beatitude and felicity; equanimity and magnanimity become his hallmark.] [7]

[Note—A man is engulfed in *Moha*, literally meaning ignorance-induced delusions leading to worldly attractions, infatuations, attachments and passions, and the ensuing trap that ensnares the creature in its web, and prevents its liberation and deliverance. This happens only till the time he is veiled by ignorance and in his stupidity thinks himself to be wise, and therefore never attempts to find out the truth; he remains contented being ignorant in his fallacious belief that ignorance is bliss! There is no bigger stupidity than this. So a wise person endeavours to understand the real and truthful nature of the world behind the façade which is nevertheless false and misleading. He realises and sees the supreme Brahman everywhere, in all the creatures, and in all the individual units of creation. Consequentially, all become equal in his eyes. He becomes humble and pious; he loses his haughtiness and arrogance; he becomes merciful, gracious and kind towards all.

Secondly, this verse builds upon verse no.1 and 2. A wise person realises the falsehood of this perishable world, the futility of pursuing it blindly. He understands that he is merely a player in the hands of the cosmic Lord. He should concentrate his energy in serving the Lord's creation selflessly without expecting any return. So, when there is no involvement in the world and the deeds are done without any hopes, all the reasons for agitations and frustrations vanish. There is no fear of failure and there is no competitor to beat. This allays all sorrows, sufferings, grief and miseries that continuously torment a creature who has not overcome *Moha*.]

8. Such a wise, erudite, realised and enlightened person (who understands the true essence and spirit of the aforesaid verses, and has realised the magnificent and divine nature of the supreme transcendental Lord) is able to attain the Lord; he is successful in his spiritual pursuit and reaches the highest citadel of spiritual endeavours by obtaining access and proximity to the Lord, and comes in direct contact with him.

[Now this verse goes on to describe some of the glorious and divine virtues of the Lord] That Lord is most radiant, splendorous, glorious, majestic, powerful, potent and mighty. He has no form, no body, either subtle or gross. Therefore, there is no question of him having any faults or shortcomings associated with a body, such as having various deformities in the form of tumors, abscesses, boils, wounds and scars etc., or being constrained within the cage-like body weaved together by the means of a network of veins and nerves having numerous holes and pores in it. [These holes and pores symbolise the numerous faults and shortcomings from which a creature suffers. The tumors and abscesses stand for such faults that are very prominent and malignant, creating interminable agony for the creature.]

The Lord is most pristine pure, immaculate, uncorrupt, unadulterated, divine, ethereal and holy. He is not bound to any deed or action, either good and holy, or bad and unholy/evil.

The Lord is an expert in the scriptures and is eternally well lettered, being omniscient and all-knowing; he is rather an embodiment of knowledge itself. He is

most exalted and supreme; he is omnipotent and almighty; he is the ultimate Authority that controls everything and everyone.

He is self-revealed, i.e. he has no cause that may be the reason for his manifestation; he is there and here because he wished to be there and here. This is obvious because he is eternal, infinite, imperishable and without a beginning and an end.

He has been, since times immemorial, assigning duties to each individual creature in accordance with his acumen, aptitude and competence, as well as the deeds already done by him in the past which necessitates fine tuning of the next set of duties to be assigned to him in the future. [That is why even twin brothers born to the same parents have different lives and different degrees of failures and successes in life. That is also why the same work done by two individuals produce different results and affect them differently.] [8].

9. Those persons who worship Avidya¹ are like blind men who fall in a dark pit or a blind well. They become shrouded in a veil of darkness symbolising ignorance of reality and ignorance-induced delusions, leading to hallucinations like a man seeing imaginary things in darkness of the night.

Meanwhile, the irony is that those who worship Vidya (which is the opposite of being ignorant and illiterate), those who are deemed to be sagacious, learned, erudite, scholarly and skilled in what is regarded as 'knowledge' (i.e. are well-read in the scriptures and considered scholarly amongst men), too fall in a dark pit, but the pit is darker and more grave and dense than the one in which their ignorant brethrens had fallen. This darkness engulfs them from all sides and firmly clasps them in its vice like grip. [9]

[Note---¹The word *Avidya* broadly means lack of true and correct knowledge of anything; it refers to being ignorant about the reality behind the misleading façade. Such persons are unwise, foolish and unaware of the actual truth. They are those people who think, inter alia, that their body is their true identity, that they are the ones doing deeds with their bodies and therefore are entitled to enjoy the fruits of those deeds and also have to suffer the bad effects of those deeds. They are unaware that there is something known as the Atma which is their true self and that it has nothing to do with either the body or what it does, that the same Atma resides in all other creatures in the world, that the world is a visible display of the stupendous maverick tricks that the supreme Lord can play, that the deeds should be treated as an offering to that Lord and a service to him, that the alluring world with all its charms is but an imagination of the mind and is as illusionary as the mirage in a desert or the ghost seen in the night, that therefore the pursuance of the world is not the aim of life and not worth the effort, and so on and so forth. Such persons become surrounded by a veil called 'ignorance of the reality and truth'. They become deluded and start hallucinating like a man under a spell.

An ignorant person can always claim a lenient treatment and expect forgiveness for his transgressions just like a child who is entitled for leniency and compassionate treatment. But this does not apply to a person who is learned and aware of what is wrong and what is right; he cannot expect any forgiveness for his misdemeanours. See note of verse no. 10 also.

The irony is that even those who have had the fortune of studying the scriptures and are considered well versed and expert in them, are worse

off if they do not understand and implement the doctrines and maxims of the scriptures in their true spirit. It is futile to study the scriptures if their intent and purpose is not grasped, which is spiritual upliftment and attaining liberation and deliverance from the trap of delusions and ignorance in which a person has fallen. Merely recitation of the hymns endlessly, engaging in detailed religious rituals and completing them flawlessly to the dot, entering in endless debates in order to establish one's scholarship and erudition, is nothing more than waste of life and energy. The real goal of knowledge is to inculcate spiritual wisdom and enlightenment which alone can pave the way for and provide emancipation and salvation to the aspirant. This wisdom would give eternal peace and tranquility, bliss and happiness to him. It would induce good virtues and make a person beneficial for the society. If that purpose is not achieved, then such persons may get fame, fortune and honour, but spiritually they would be regarded as having fallen in a darker well because if an ignorant man commits an inadvertent error, he can be excused, but if the same error is committed by an expert, it is unforgivable. After all, what is the purpose of studying and acquiring knowledge if a man still commits the same mistake as his illiterate brother!

This verse is not meant to confuse the spiritual aspirant or seeker. It does not imply that a man should not study or acquire knowledge. The intention here is to make it clear that if the knowledge is superficial and just acquired with worldly aim of acquiring fame, name, honour and wealth, then its purpose would be defeated, and it will be denigrating, decapitating and demeaning for the exalted 'soul' of the creature and act as a deterrent for the spiritual upliftment of the individual. It would bog him down with worldly allurements that are very enticing on the surface but hollow and worthless from the inside. A person will be better off being ignorant and stupid because at least he would be humble and meek instead of being proud, haughty and arrogant about his misplaced knowledge, and therefore liable to be excused. See verse no. 12 also]

10. It is said that the reward or fruit of acquiring correct and truthful knowledge, or being acquainted with the facts in the correct perspective, is quite different from that got from acquiring superficial knowledge without going deep into its subtle and sublime fundamental meaning and understanding its profound import.¹ Similarly, doing deeds in the correct and truthful manner produces results which are quite different from those obtained by merely doing deeds without understanding the subtle and esoteric meaning, in a holistic way, behind the sublime concept of doing deeds in the correct manner.² This is what we have heard and learnt from our seniors and seriously wise persons who have explained these concepts to us threadbare in detail.[10]

[Note—¹ The acquisition of knowledge should make a man enlightened and wise, and such a man can never be haughty. He would realise, *inter alia*, that all creatures are alike, he will possess noble virtues and qualities, and he will effuse divinity and piety instead of arrogance, haughtiness, egotism and pride. Correct knowledge entails having the ability to distinguish between what is perishable and what is imperishable. It inspires the learned person to become completely dispassionate and detached from all things that are perishable and cause of entrapments; to live a well regulated and restrained life with an exemplary control over the natural urges of the sense organs and the mind; to be firmly rooted in the ultimate Truth and unequivocal Reality;

to be ever engrossed in and remain submerged in eternal bliss obtained by self realisation of the supreme Truth about the Atma and the transcendental nature of the soul.

On the other hand, those persons who become boastful of their scriptural knowledge and become proud and self obsessed, they fall in the pit of darkness which is worse off than the one in which truly ignorant people fall. This is because the former have misused the golden opportunity available to them; they had the opportunity to study the great knowledge contained in the magnificent scriptures and benefit from them, but they could not put it to good use. The ignorant ones are excused because they are unlucky and had no such opportunity, for there are chances that if they did have it, they could have excelled in it.

² Doing deeds without expecting any reward from them, doing deeds without getting emotionally involved in them, doing deeds with detachment and dispassion, doing deeds as a matter of duty, doing deeds as an offering to the supreme Lord, doing deeds in a proper, sanctified manner, and doing what is righteous and virtuous—these are some of the ways of doing deeds correctly and in a truthful manner. Obviously, their results would be quite the opposite of what one gets by getting involved indulgently in them, by being emotional about them—for such deeds lead to frustration, restlessness, more yearnings and greater intensity of desires, more stronger hopes and expectations, more striving for unaccomplished tasks, accompanied by a chain of joys and sorrows, grief and exhilarations, elations and depressions, but surely not true bliss, happiness, peace, tranquility and serenity that is obtained by being unattached to deeds.

Besides this, all deeds have their side effects and results. These cannot be brushed aside and swept below the carpet. They have to be borne; they have to be suffered. So even though a man dies, these residual effects of the deeds done by him keep dogging him in his life after death, and consequentially he has to cope with them in his new life.

On the contrary, if a man realises that his true identity is the Atma, and not the body which actually and physically does the deed, then he remains absolved of their effects because the body would suffer due to the deeds done, and not the Atma which is the man's true identity. Such a man does not feel either happy or sorry for any deed done by the body. See also verse nos. 9, 11 and 13]

11. A person who becomes aware of and wisened about the truthful, correct, precise and factual essence of these two—(i) the concept of true knowledge, and (ii) the concept of doing deeds in the correct perspective—simultaneously (i.e. who understands the basic idea behind 'correct knowledge and correct deeds', who interprets the scripture's prescription about knowledge and deeds correctly, in the correct perspective, and in a judicious manner), does deeds and takes actions that enables him or entitles him to cross over the barrier of death relying upon the truthful knowledge that he has acquired by the study of the scriptures. Once this hurdle (fear) of death is overcome, he finds the ambrosia of eternity and bliss, called Amrit, and enjoys it. On the contrary, not paying heed to or ignorance of the basic idea behind 'correct way of doing deeds and acquiring knowledge'—called Avidya—casts him unto death.[11]

[Note—This verse concludes the issues discussed in verse no.9 and 10-- i.e. the concept of correct knowledge and its correct application as well as correct interpretation of the concept of doing deeds in the sanctified

manner. One must be very careful in understanding the fine distinction between 'doing deeds in a righteous and scripturally sanctioned manner' and 'doing them in an improper way'. A wise man is one who understands that doing deeds is not at all prohibited by the scriptures; in fact they exhort one to carry on with his duties in an auspicious and righteous manner. And what is this manner? It is to do deeds without getting emotionally involved in either the deeds or their results, good or bad. The reason for this is that the true identity of the man is his Atma, and not his body. The deeds are done by the body, and if the mind-intellect-heart complex is not involved in what is being done, then naturally the 'true self' cannot be accused either of doing the deeds or made to suffer or enjoy its results. A wise man is he who treats all deeds as a duty assigned to him by the supreme Lord, all his deeds and actions become an offering and a service to that supreme Lord, as has been stressed in earlier verses of this Upanishad. He feels honoured and privileged at having got an opportunity to serve the commands of the supreme Lord. Further, this creates a sense of total detachment and dispassion towards the deeds and even for the world, because a wise and enlightened man realises that the world is a creation of the mind, it is as illusory as the mirage in a desert, and to get involved in something that is false is a pinnacle of stupidity. 'Non-involvement in deeds' is the key to doing deeds in the correct manner, while 'doing them as a service to the supreme Lord, as a means of worshiping him and offering oblations to him' is equivalent to doing deeds auspiciously, and this will automatically entail doing them righteously and in a proper manner because no one offers improper things to his master. With this eclectic and divine view, the deeds become a vehicle of providing liberation and deliverance instead of acting as a hindrance in a person's spiritual well being. Such deeds do not leave any consequences in their wake.

Those persons, on the contrary, who abandon their duties and responsibilities on the erroneous pretext that scriptures advise that 'deeds are shackling for a creature, they lead to entrapment of the soul, they lead a creature to being bogged down in the quagmire represented by this world, and the interminable shackling chain of one deed leading to another', and therefore should be best avoided altogether, have not understood the true meaning of doing deeds dispassionately, indifferently and with non-involvement with them. They quote scriptures to endorse their view that since the world is false, one should not pursue it, that the deeds are by their inherent nature entrapping, and they produce consequences that are impediments to spiritual liberation. Such people are runaways and lazy louts; they shirk responsibilities and obligations in the guise of carrying out the edicts of the scriptures. They are pretenders and imposters. They have not understood the true essence of the edicts and the precepts of the scriptures.

A wise man interprets the scriptures in the correct perspective. This correct knowledge, its correct meaning, its correct application in the correct perspective inspires a man to benefit from both the concepts of 'doing deeds' as well as 'acquiring knowledge'. Both compliment and supplement each other rather than being at odds.

How does true knowledge help a man benefit from the deeds? Well, this is exactly what is meant by, *inter alia*, doing deeds with dispassion, not getting emotionally attached with either them or their results, considering the deeds as a means of worship of and service to the supreme Lord as well as his manifestation in the form of creatures of this world (because the Atma in all living beings is the same and this Atma in

none other than the supreme Lord revealed), and being totally renunciate and dispassionate towards this material world and its misleading allurements. In fact, a truly knowledgeable person is aware that he is not a 'doer' of deeds, as 'he' is the Atma and not the body that does the deeds in the first place. He knows of what constitutes *Mukti* or true form of liberation and deliverance from the ensnaring world. (This concept of Mukti and its different types have been discussed in other Upanishads, especially Muktiko-panishad, which is chapter 19 of this anthology.)

The real aim of acquiring knowledge is empowerment that sets a creature on the path of liberation and deliverance from the burden and slavery of ignorance. If false knowledge continues to shackle him to the yolk of ignorance, he would continue to be born as a beast of burden in spite of studying the scriptures and being recognised as a scholar and a learned person in every birth. He may be that, but surely he is not realised, enlightened and wise. Such persons are cheating themselves, are imposters and deluded, are worse off than their brothers who are truly ignorant and illiterate, because the latter can be excused for their errors as well as omissions and commissions on compassionate grounds.

This holistic approach of combining the concept of doing deeds in this world with the concept of doing them righteously in accordance with the sanction of the scriptures, which is only possible by acquiring truthful knowledge, serves many purposes. The life is spent peacefully, contentedly and blissfully even while a man goes about his daily chores because he is firm in his conviction that he is serving his Lord, he is worshipping his Lord every moment of the day. His actions become holy and beneficial for whole humanity. Since he has realised that the Atma in all the creatures is the same and it is the supreme Brahm revealed in that form, he becomes benevolent, magnanimous, merciful, compassionate and loving towards all; he acquires such virtues as equanimity, tolerance, fortitude and forbearance. This in the true sense rids him of all fears; he has no enemies.

Further, since he has realised that the body is not his truthful self, and that it is but only a temporary habitat for the Atma during its sojourn in this world because of some past deeds that he has done, thinking at that time that 'he is a doer and should be entitled to enjoy its results' due to ignorance of the true nature of the Atma, resulting in him having to take this birth, he guards against committing the same error once again in his present life. He is aware of the perishable nature of the body, so there is no question of getting worried about its death; he knows that 'he' in his basic and quintessential form as the Atma will not die because the latter is inherently eternal and imperishable. There is no such thing as 'death' for the Atma or soul, as it is eternal. What dies is the perishable body and not the imperishable Atma/soul. He learns that his true identity is the Atma/soul and not the body. Hence, he realises that he has nothing to fear from death which had been constantly nagging him up till now, and this fills him with perpetual happiness and bliss. He feels that he will never perish in the conventional term. Only Brahm never dies; so he realises his similarity with the eternal Brahm. He is not worried and worked up over the work that he is to do, because the work pertains to the mortal world and the 'spirit' has no obligations; the spirit or soul or Atma is eternally free and without bondages of any kind. This is true *Gyan* or acquisition of correct knowledge of the scriptures.]

12. That person who worships those entities that are perishable, non-eternal, non-infinite, and subject to decay and destruction, they enter the dark realm of ignorance very much like a blind person entering a well (see verse no. 9). In other words, they are like a blind person who cannot see the 'light of truth' because he lacks the sight of wisdom and enlightenment¹.

Similarly, those who are engrossed, submerged and absorbed in adoring and worshipping the entity that is known as 'Sambhut', i.e. that which is all encompassing, all pervading, eternal, infinite, truthful and beautiful, also enter into a realm that is more pitch dark than the darkness into which ignorant ones enter².

[Note—¹The reference here is to those people who worship different Gods who are patron Gods of various things, successes and accomplishments in this materialistic world, so that they can achieve fulfillment of their worldly desires. Since nothing in the creation is eternal except Brahm, all these Gods are also deemed to be mortal, though their life cycle is many times greater than that of the creature. In case the Gods get pleased, they can bless the devotee with only those things that are under their jurisdiction and command; they cannot give him anything over which any other God has his sway. So the benefits become limited and measurable in terms of quality and quantity. Hence, such people erroneously think that they are worshipping a particular God and therefore are entitled to all the benefits that come with worshipping and honouring some divine entity that is superior and majestic in the world. They do achieve a superior status, but this is not the ultimate supreme status which is only achieved by Brahm realisation. So, obviously, such people enter the darkness represented by ignorance of the truthful form of worship.

²Verse no. 9 is cited in this context. The intention here is not that one should not worship the eternal and truthful supreme entity, which is Brahm, but one should not be proud of the fact that he is enlightened, erudite, wise and sagacious enough to realise that it is futile to worship lesser Gods who would find an end one day, and instead he is worshipping the most exalted and supreme Lord who is the highest authority and has sway over all the other Gods. This is because 'pride' is a negative trait in the spiritual realm, anything having a negative value is denigrating and demeaning instead of spiritually uplifting.

Another meaning is this—if a person cannot respect and show compassion to others, if he cannot have equanimity in this world, then what is the use of his worshipping the all-pervading, omnipresent, immanent Lord? Is that Lord not present in one's opponent, or in the humble human starving on the streets? Further, one should not demean any God or form of worship because each of these Gods is one or the other manifestation of Divinity; all represent Brahm in one way or the other. A person who is proud of his scriptural knowledge and prowess without actually knowing what is actually said and meant in those canons is indeed fallen in a dark blind well of ignorance.]

13. It is said that the reward or fruit of truthful form of worship of the imperishable entity, the Brahm, is quite different to the one mentioned earlier (in verse no.12)¹. Similarly, the reward or fruit of properly worshipping the not-so-exalted entities (or those that are perishable, such as the ordinary Gods and spirits of dead ancestors) is also quite different.² This is what we have heard and learnt from seriously wise people who have elucidated the details of this subject for our benefit.[13]

[Note—¹ Verse nos.12 and 13 should be read together to understand the full import. Verse no.12 says that those who worship the imperishable Brahm but in the wrong way enter a horrifying dark realm marked by ignorance, and in this verse it is clarified that the reward is different if the same worship is done with proper understanding, erudition and wisdom.

This is the difference:-- When we honour and worship Brahm in a holistic way, we are actually worshipping and honouring all the Gods in that single Brahm alongside all the stellar virtues in creation that Brahm embodies and stands for. Some of these virtues of Brahm are that he is divine, ethereal, eternal, infinite, imperishable, attributeless, enlightened, wisest, all pervading, all encompassing, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, almighty, all bearing, one complete and immutable whole, the doer and the enjoyer, the creator, the sustainer and the concluder, the supreme and transcendental authority, and the most exalted soul or Atma of creation.

There are many forms that this worship takes—such as being devoted to him and faithfully adhering to his principles of auspicious and righteous living, his constant remembrance, repeating his divine Mantras, being compassionate to his creation and serving it selflessly and with commitment, and implementing his tenets in our daily lives, etc.

Obviously, when we make noble ideals our object of sincere worship, we would be expected to follow those ideals. Mere oratory and eulogizing the virtues for public consumption will not lead us anywhere except the dark, blind well referred to in note to verse 12. On the contrary, sincerity of worship will entail we mould ourselves according to those noble ideals. A person who worships Brahm with this erudition and wisdom is sure to reap suitable rewards. Honesty and truthfulness are the quintessential requirement for this to happen.

² Similarly, if the Gods, spirits, ancestors etc. are worshipped for mundane, short range and short term benefits, then surely it is like bargaining a worthless piece of glass for diamond. These Gods should be offered worship selflessly because they are superior to us and represent the glorious virtues of Brahm. We must pay respects to our elders and ancestors to seek their blessings with all due humility. And which parent is so stone-hearted that he or she would not take care of his or her ward? When worship to Gods and spirits is offered piously, they would go out of their way to bless us magnanimously and generously.

This selfless form of worship of the Gods is far better than their worship seeking worldly benefits and short term good. This is the subtle message in these verses. See also verse no. 10 in this context.]

14. That person who simultaneously understands and learns about, becomes aware of, or gets wisened and enlightened about the truthful essence and meaning of both these entities—the imperishable Brahm and the perishable other Gods —and their worship, such a person crosses over the hurdle of death and overcomes its fear by worshipping the perishable entities (the Gods, Spirits, ancestors etc.). He ultimately reaches the imperishable one (the Brahm) to enjoy the ambrosia of bliss, beatitude and felicity (called Amrit). [14].

[Note---When a person realises the fact that everything except Brahm is perishable and subject to death and decay, then he does not get attached to anything; he loses interest in them. He uses them to support his body which must do its assigned deeds because it has been born in this world with certain responsibilities. The material objects of this world are

needed to fulfill the various obligations of life, but not as a means to become indulgent and obsessive with them. So, the Gods etc., who are their patrons, are worshipped dispassionately and selflessly. Such a man has no fear from death because he has not to worry about his family, his assets and his liabilities. He is also assured that none of the Gods who are patron Gods of various aspects of creation are adverse to him as he has been duly worshipping them while he was alive. So they won't create any hurdle in his smooth path to emancipation and salvation. He has lived a righteous life and dies happily. He dies calmly and peacefully because he knows that he has led an honourable life of dispassion and has finally reached that threshold that would lead his soul to break the shackles of this body and attain emancipation and salvation by merging itself with the supreme transcendental Soul of the creation, i.e. Brahm. He knows that what is dying is the body which had never belonged to him in the first place. He is the Atma or soul, and it never dies. It's like a snake smoothly coming out of its old cuticle.

Further, he realises that the whole creation is moving along a designated path determined by its creator just like a machine or computer works according to how its designer and maker has intended it to work. He understands that the scriptures have sanctioned a systematic way of living in this world which would be righteous and auspicious, because it would be tantamount to participating in a divine play of the supreme Brahm. So when he worships the Gods or serves the world, he does it with selflessness and dispassion; he treats his worship and service as an offering to the holy sacrificial fire. Each one of his deeds and actions become an oblation to the holy fire. It becomes his symbolic worship of Brahm.

Therefore, upon death, since he has been worshipping the 'imperishable and eternal One (Brahm)' all along, the latter accepts him at the time of death. Such a self-realised and enlightened person just steps from 'this world' to the 'next world' effortlessly and without any hassles. Calmness and peace accompany him in this transition. This achievement is akin to receiving Amrit or the ambrosia of eternal bliss and happiness because all the deeds and actions of a man are aimed at getting happiness and peace, whether worldly or spiritual. While he was alive, he had been pleasing the Gods, who incidentally represent the different cosmic forces of Nature, by his sincere service and worship, and upon death he is welcome by their Emperor, the Brahm, because the latter knows that it was actually 'he' who was being worshipped and served by that wise man when he was worshipping and serving the Gods and other entities such as spirits of dead ancestors and senior men when he was alive.

Refer also to verse no.11 in this context.]

15. 'Oh the truthful Lord who is the sustainer, nourisher and protector of all that exists! You are an embodiment of imperishable Truth and Reality. Your divine face has been veiled or covered by an upturned pot which is splendorous, radiant and blindingly dazzling. This pot is symbolised by the Sun and its immediate environs. This pot appears to be like a veil or covering that conceals your divine and glorious face from my view (even as a radiantly burning flame is hidden from view if an upturned pot is put over it). I have been following the path of truthfulness and righteousness, and am very sincerely eager to have your divine vision. So please remove that glaring veil that surrounds you so I can see and witness you. [15].

[Note—It has been said earlier that one who worships the supreme Brahm attains that Brahm upon death. In this verse, the Upanishadic sage describes how he should pray to and honour the supreme Lord in order to attain him at the time of death.

The *veil* has a double meaning here. In the first instance it is like a blinding Sun. It implies that 'if one wishes to face the sun-like brilliant Brahm, he has to close his eyes to the external world because when one looks at the sun, the eyes close instinctively. The symbolic splendour of the veil is the dazzle of the enticing world itself—the pomp and pelf, the worldly honours and comforts, and such other endless variety of attractions and allurements that blind an ignorant man, and are so enticing and charming that he is compelled to take repeated births in order to enjoy them, and to die again and again for them, but ironically he never has enough of them! This dazzle and glitter of the delusory world also literally blinds a man so much so that he closes his eyes to the 'truth'. This ignorance is the symbolic 'veil'.

Another interpretation is this—The 'veil' represents the myriad paths, the different philosophies and schools of thoughts and beliefs, which are all impediments to a spiritual seeker, because they tend to confuse him instead of lightening his way, in spite of the fact they all of them are noble, righteous and effective in their own right. Each one of them has its own glory and virtues symbolised by the splendour and radiance of the Sun referred above in this verse. But they create so much confusion and dazzle that the seeker is unable to see through their blinding glare; he gets lost and loses sight of his prime target, the attainment of Brahm. It comes to such a pass that he even begins to have doubts who is that Brahm and what are his qualities.

Hence, the aspirant here prays to the Lord to remove all these hurdles from his path because they are causing hindrance in his spiritual pursuit, instead of aiding him. He does not want to see the glitter of the knowledge contained in the scriptures because they are blinding his judgment; and he wishes to avoid the allurements of the various benefits that are offered on a platter by the numerous paths known for emancipation and salvation because they are like potholes on the way.

In essence, he requests the Lord to remove all things, even the good and glorious ones that cause hindrance in his spiritual pursuit and create obstacles in his attainment of emancipation and salvation.]

16. 'Oh Lord who is the sustainer of all, is one and unique of his kind, is the controller and regulator of all, is like the bright, radiant, dazzling and splendorous Sun, and is the Lord of the entire creation which is his subject! Please remove all the rays of this dazzling light of yours which has blinded me, so that I can have a divine view of your most auspicious, glorious, sublime, subtle, divine, holy, ethereal and exalted form. That which is there, i.e. the glorious Sun, is an image of the supreme and transcendental primary Viraat Purush who is the invisible, all-pervading, all-encompassing, immanent, almighty and supreme Lord of the cosmos. Indeed, I am that 'Purush'! [16].

[Note---The *Sun* is compared to the Lord in its magnificent splendour and life sustaining divine virtues. When the disciple of the Upanishadic sage insisted that the teacher show him one simple example so that the disciple can have a rough idea to understand and grasp the significance and import of the different attributes ascribed to Brahm, such as the fact that he cannot be seen, that he is very dazzling and radiant, that he lights the world, that his glories can be realised and experienced but cannot be

comprehended, and so on and so forth, the wise and practical teacher thought for a while and decided that the brightly shining Sun high up at the noon time was the best metaphor for Brahm because it almost fits the bill. The disciple was made to look up and see that Brahm, and when he looked up he immediately shut his eyes as the dazzle of the Sun blinded him. It was then the disciple realised that it is not possible to see the supreme Brahm even as it is not possible to see the Sun though it is there and the teacher is coaxing him to see it. No one can deny the existence of the Sun on a bright noon day, but can anyone actually see it to believe its existence? No man can 'actually see' the Sun directly at noon time because he would become instantly blind. The same thing applies to Brahm. No one can actually see him.

The maxim that 'I am that supreme Brahm' is a universal truth expounded by the Vedas, because that supreme Lord has his image in the Atma residing in the bosom of the individual creature. This Atma is the microcosm of the cosmic Atma represented by the Lord who is none other than Brahm. The Sun is a metaphor for Brahm, while the Atma is a synonym for the latter. Therefore the Atma is also as brilliant as the Sun.]

17. [Now the wise aspirant or seeker prepares himself to witness Brahm after having realised his exalted and supreme existence. In other words, he wishes to discard his gross body along with his subtle body, and let them disintegrate into their basic elements and merge with the latter. He would then be liberated from all encumbrances of the body, and would in turn be free to merge his own Atma with its primary source, and that source is Brahm---]

Let the vital winds present in the body dissolve and merge with the eternal and elementary cosmic 'wind force' of Nature called Vayu. Once the vital winds leave the body, it would be as good as dead; thence let the gross body burn (at the time of cremation) and revert back to its primary form, the earth, by being reduced to ashes.

Oh the supreme Lord known by the ethereal and divine word 'OM'! Pay heed to and remember the efforts that I am making to attain you. Oh Lord! Remember me and my sincere efforts. Oh my mind! The time has come; remember the supreme Lord whom I have been remembering all along. It was for this moment that I've been endeavouring for so long; and now I repeat the request again. [17]

[Note--- The last line is indeed remarkable. The words have been so arranged that the basic idea can be interpreted in different ways. (i) For example—'Oh the doer of deeds (i.e. my own self)! Remember your Lord always while you engage your self in doing deeds! Oh you doer of deeds! Remember him while you do your deeds!'

(ii) The word OM is used as a divine Mantra while offerings are made to the fire sacrifice. Therefore, this verse can be interpreted as follows also—'OM salutations! I am offering all my deeds to the symbolic fire sacrifice performed by using my body as the firewood (because it has already been said in the first line that the body should get reduced to ashes). When the body is offered as fuel, the natural corollary is that the winds present in the body are released to fan the sacrificial fire. This is a symbolic way of saying that the wind merges with the cosmic wind. The aspirant offers his deeds as oblations to this sacrifice, and the deity that is worshipped is the supreme Brahm.' This interpretation is validated by the following verse in which the Fire God is being invoked.]

18. 'Oh the Fire God! You must take us along the righteous and auspicious path leading to the supreme and transcendental Lord who is the Lord of all (i.e. Brahm). Oh Lord (the Fire God)! It is you who empowers the Wind God to sustain life in this world (as is evident from the fact that frigid cold air of the arctic-circle is not conducive to vibrant life)¹; you are Lord of the universe²; you are wise, erudite, sagacious and scholarly³. You are omniscient and all-knowing; hence you know all about us that is worth knowing, as well as about our deeds. Therefore, you are aware of the best path suitable for us.

So, remove and eliminate for good all sins and other stumbling blocks that might act as obstacles in our path of spiritual progress. [In other words, all those things which act like a loop or a stranglehold tying us down to this illusionary and perishable world, we request you to remove them from our spiritual path by reducing them to ashes so that our spiritual journey to the supreme Brahm becomes smooth.] We repeatedly prostrate before your majesty; we bow before you most reverentially. We pray to you with due honour and respect! [18].

[Note—¹The *fire* element of Nature is equally important as the 'wind' element. Though wind or air is absolutely necessary for life, the fire gives the warmth and heat without which life would freeze to death. The air would be of no use if the creature dies due to extreme cold. Hence, the 'fire' element is treated as being synonymous with Brahm.

²Being equivalent to Brahm and being the most important operating entity that helps sustain life in this creation, the 'fire' is indeed the 'Lord' of this world. If the Lord or the king dies, the kingdom disintegrates quickly. Life as we know it would be unimaginable without fire.

³Being equivalent to the supreme Brahm, it naturally has the latter's attributes of 'being wise'. This is a symbolic way of praising the 'fire element' of Nature. The ancients were Nature worshippers, and ancient Vedic scriptures adored and honoured the 'fire' by making the fire-sacrifice as central to all religious activities. The 'fire' was the most revered and feared element of Nature. This is the Upanishadic seer's way of paying his homage to the stupendous forces of Nature, especially the 'fire' element which has sustained and fostered life in this world.

Knowledge (or Gyan) is also like the 'fire'. If used properly and judiciously, knowledge proves to be the best companion of a man, whilst it can be ruinous if improperly used. For example, in modern life we have amply seen how knowledge of science has on the one hand proved to be a bonanza, whilst the same science is exploited to cause widespread death and destruction.

To summarize this Upanishad—where does the Lord live? The answer is 'everywhere'. The omnipresent and immanent Lord lives inside as much as he lives outside of us. It is the veil of ignorance that prevents us from 'seeing' him. No one can see him in physical terms just like no one can actually see the brilliant Sun at noon time, though it is undeniable that the Sun is very much there. We deduce the presence of the Sun by the virtue of its light. Likewise, we deduce the presence of Brahm by the virtue of the magnificent world we see around us. Each single unit of it is Brahm personified. Just as gold present in a golden ornament decides its intrinsic value, it is the subtle presence of Brahm in this creation which lends it its worth.

How is this Brahm realised? The answer is 'through correct knowledge', and not merely 'knowledge'. And what is 'correct knowledge'? It is the knowledge of the fact that there is nothing worthwhile except Brahm. This Brahm reveals as the pure consciousness known as the Atma or soul of anything and everything. Since 'truth' is always *one* and undisputable, it follows that if this visible existence were to be 'true'

it must be *one* and *not two*, i.e. it must be one single non-dual Brahm revealed in as many forms as revealed in this creation.

And what is the path that leads to this Brahm? It is the path of ‘doing deeds in the correct way, with the correct perspective’. And what is it? The answer is ‘doing deeds dispassionately, as an offering to the holy Brahm’. There is therefore no expectation of reward. This is being selfless and egoless, because the ‘self’ is Brahm in the form of the Atma, and the deed done by the body is offered to this Brahm. This is complete fulfillment because nothing more is needed to be done to satisfy one’s self. The notion of being synonymous with the exalted and supreme Brahm is the culmination of spiritual pursuit. Then, there is no difference between the ‘self’ and Brahm.

Thus, the ‘self’ is where the Brahm resides!]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—2

BRHIHAD ARANYAK UPANISHAD

Brihad Aranyak Upanishad is the largest Upanishadic text and is so called because of its vastness and its composition in the forest. The first word ‘Brihad’ means vast, huge, extensive, large scale, stretched, something having great dimensions and import, while the second word ‘Aranyak’ usually refers to a forest, but more importantly it implies a place that is serene, tranquil, peaceful and calm, devoid of all worldly agitations and restlessness. Since self-realisation of the true nature of the self, leading to enlightenment and ultimate liberation and deliverance of the creature is the sole aim of Upanishadic teachings, with contemplation and meditation as a part of this exercise, and these can be practiced in a peaceful environment, forests therefore provided the proper environ and ambience for spiritual pursuits. Since this most fascinating, magnificent and marvelous Upanishad was conceived, studied and taught in a forest, and since it is not only huge in size and voluminous in terms of its textual content but also because there is virtually no metaphysical, theological and spiritual topic of consequence, having far reaching importance and significance, that is not covered in it, it is called by this name of ‘Brihad Aranyak’. The third word ‘Upanishad’ of course refers to the effort of the seeker to sit down before a learned teacher to acquire knowledge about the ‘truth’ that would dispel all his ignorance and delusions, an accomplishment that would pave the path for his emancipation and salvation.

It falls within the ambit of Kanvi branch of Shukla Yajur Veda in its Vajsaneya-Shatpath Brahmin.

This Upanishad has six cantos, each having a number of sub-cantos or Brahmins. Briefly, the first canto has six Brahmins, the second also has six, the third has nine, the fourth has six, the fifth has fifteen, and finally the sixth canto has five Brahmins. Therefore there are forty seven Brahmins in all. These sub-cantos are called ‘Brahmins’ because each verse of this particular Upanishad is deemed to have descended directly from the supreme transcendental Brahm through a chain of great sages and seers whose names have been mentioned in this Upanishad itself. Besides

this point, they form a part of the holy Shukla Yajur Veda, and as such are the holy edicts of this Veda, and not merely an ordinary literary composition. They are deemed to be as pure and divine as the Veda itself. Since the Vedas have directly descended from Brahma at the time of creation, each individual section is named a 'Brahmin', or a set of edicts that are direct descendants of Brahma's own wisdom. The word 'Brahmin' also implies that these chapters are sanctified, divine, holy and pure, and they have the greatest of wisdom and erudition enshrined in them.

Now let us have a bird's eye view of the various cantos and their Brahmins.

Canto 1, Brahmin 1 and 2—these two Brahmins describe the symbolic cosmic horse-sacrifice which was done to initiate the process of creation, and it describes the creation step by step. Brahmin 1 describes the how this horse is regarded as a symbol of the entire creation, while Brahmin 2 describes the scene after the conclusion of the creation and at the start of a fresh creation.

Brahmin 3 describes the difference between the Gods and the non-Gods. Prajapati (the guardian of creation) had two sons —the Gods and the non-Gods (or demons). They symbolised the righteous and auspicious as well as the unrighteous and inauspicious aspects of creation respectively. Since the organs of the gross body have a tendency to be extrovert and seek gratification, worldly pleasures and material comforts, instead of having an inclination to be inward looking and seek spiritual liberation and deliverance, they have a predominance of worldly virtues as opposed to spiritual virtues. Therefore, the 'non-Gods' were the predominant element in visible creation as compared to 'Gods' because of the greater proportion or ratio of bad virtues over the good ones that prevailed in the world as it existed. Or in other words, the inherent tendency in a creature to sway more towards the gross world of delusion and artificiality was more intense and forceful as compared to its desire to turn towards the more subtle and sublime aspects of creation, and seek what is the actual truth as compared to the apparent truth, i.e. to veer away from falsehood to truthfulness.

Once, the Gods decided to subdue their evil brothers, the non-Gods, by using 'Udgith' which is a religious ritual whereby the Sam Veda hymns are sung in honour of the supreme Lord to please him and seek his blessings. The Gods asked the patron Gods of speech, smell, sight, hearing and touch (feeling) to do it for them. These patron Gods did do the Udgith ritual, but the demons proved more cunning as they went to them and corrupted them. As a result, these Gods became selfish and they wished to enjoy the benefits of Udgith singing for themselves. Since rituals done with selfish motives go in vain, the Udgith exercise was also wasted. Then the Gods requested Pran (the Atma, the soul, the life sustaining forces of life present in a creature, the breath and the vital winds) to do the exercise for them. Pran is so selfless, magnanimous and benevolent that the Udgith exercise was finally successful and the Gods could prevail upon and gain superiority over their brethren, the non-Gods. The Pran proved that it was much superior to all others and cannot be corrupted at all. This Brahmin emphasises the importance and significance of Pran and at the same time describes its different forms. The emphasis of this parable is on selflessness in order to succeed in the spiritual path. Another important Upanishad deals with the same subject, and it is Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition, in its canto 1, section 2.

Brahmin 4 describes how the same supreme transcendental Brahm had manifested himself as each individual unit of this vast and multifarious creation, thereby establishing himself throughout it in a uniform manner. It describes how a male and a female were created, how the various Prans got their names, how the four

classes in society were born, and how those who have the truthful knowledge about the reality and are self realised become equivalent to Brahm themselves.

Brahmin 5 describes the creation of food and the importance of Mana (mind and heart, thoughts and emotions), Vani (speech) and Pran (the vital life sustaining breath).

Brahmin 6 emphasises the importance of ‘name, form and deeds’, the triad that constitute this manifestation known as the creation or the world.

Canto 2, Brahmin 1—It describes the metaphysical debate between king Ajatshatru of Kashi (Varanasi) and sage Balaki Gargya in which the proud sage was defeated by the king in the theological discussion about Brahm and Atma as well as the metaphysical knowledge pertaining to these two sublime authorities. The sage was very proud of his knowledge which was superficial and lacked depth of spiritualism which comes with self-realisation. The king pricked holes in each of the many methods by which the sage thought he was worshipping Brahm by pointing out lacunae in them. Finally, the sage surrendered and sought the king’s guidance for acquisition of truthful and sublime knowledge about the supreme transcendental Brahm. Then the king took him to a sleeping man and explained the concept of the pure conscious Atma, the enlightened entity which is a manifestation of Brahm and is distinct from the rest of the gross creation.

Brahmin 2 and 3 deal with the two forms of Brahm—one is the formless, unqualified and attributeless entity, and the other is the formed variant with various qualities and attributes. It also lays stress on the supremacy of the Atma and its worth as an entity that should be adored, honoured and worshipped.

Brahmin 4 describes the conversation between sage Yagyavalkya and Maitreyi, his wife, who was enlightened and mentally spiritually inclined. Sage Yagyavalkya had two wives —Maitreyi and Katyayani. When the sage decided to take to Sanyas (i.e. he decided to renounce this world and become a wandering friar and a reclusive ascetic) he asked his two wives to divide his assets amongst themselves. Maitreyi, being spiritually inclined and wise, asked her husband to give her that asset which was immortal and would provide her with immortal happiness and bliss. She did not prefer to take that worldly wealth which would perish one day. At this, Yagyavalkya felt very pleased and he taught her about Atma and Brahm which provides the basis of spiritual liberation and deliverance of a creature, and which are fundamental to all the teachings and tenets of Veda and Upanishad philosophy.

Brahmin 5 and 6 are called ‘Madhu Brahmins’. Citing the example of Madhu or honey which is the product obtained by refinement of nectar collected by the honeybee from so many flowers, it is the refined and best form of the essence of those flowers, it is expounded here, as a conversation between sage Dadhyang-Atharvan and sage Ashwini-Kumars, that the ‘Purush’, the live consciousness present in the creature and the cosmos as their soul or Atma, is the real thing and the only irrefutable truth; it is literally the ‘refined nectar’ of the entire creation. It is the Atma that has assumed so many myriad forms by the virtue of its mystical illusion-creating powers, and it does so many deeds in those forms. In essence, all that matters in this creation is nothing but the Atma.

Canto no. 3 describes how king Janak (the wisest king of his time and the father of Sita) held a ceremony in which anyone who was the greatest scholar of the time, most erudite exponent of Brahm, most sagacious and wise expert on Brahm, could take away ten thousand cows with gold plated horns. A huge crowd of expert

Brahmins congregated there, but no one dared to take away the cows. It was sage Yagyavalkya who unhesitatingly ordered his disciples to take away the cows, creating a furor in the assembly when the entire assembled scholar challenged him. Then Yagyavalkya satisfactorily answered all the metaphysical and theological questions asked of him by the assembly of wise scholars who wanted to prove that he had no right to take away the cows unchallenged and try to prove that he was the wisest and most enlightened amongst them.

Brahmin 1 describes the questions asked by Ashwal about sacrificial rituals and how they provide deserving benefits to the chief patron. In Brahmin 2, Artabhag asks about death. Brahmin 3 deals with the questions asked by Bhrijyu about re-birth and the world after death. The all-pervading and pure conscious supreme soul called the Sarwantar-Atma that resides in the bosom of all living creatures is the subject of questioning by Ushasta Chakrayan in Brahmin 4, while Kahalok is the questioner in Brahmin 5 when he goes further and enquires more about the Atma which is self evident and truthful, and which is a personification of Brahm. Yagyavalkya describes the essential sublime and ethereal nature of the Atma, and prescribes the path of Sanyas (a life of renunciation and detachment from this mundane and deluding world) as a means to realise and witness this Atma. Brahmin 6 describes the questioning by the wise hermitress named Gargi about the entity that is the base and foundation of all that exists, and Yagyavalkya said it was the Atma. Similarly, Brahmin 7 describes how he answered Aruni who had asked him about that authority which is the sovereign residing in the bosom of all the creatures. Gargi finally asks him two questions in Brahmin 8 about that entity which is imperishable, infinite, eternal, fathomless and immeasurable, and which is indefinable and incomprehensible. When Yagyavalkya satisfactorily answers these questions, the hermitress declares that the sage is indeed the most learned, wise and enlightened amongst those assembled there, and he wins hands down as an undisputed scholar in 'Brahm Vidya' or the knowledge pertaining to Brahm which is the subject of study and pursuit in metaphysics, theology and spiritualism.

In spite of this, Brahmin 9 narrates how Shakalya tried to defeat Yagyavalkya by asking irrelevant and impertinent questions just for the sake of a showdown; this infuriated the sage and he cursed him. As a result, his head fell down. Then Yagyavalkya asked the assembly certain profound metaphysical questions about that supreme authority known as the 'Purush', who is the Lord of creation and the Supreme Being described by the Upanishads, and challenges them to answer them individually or collectively. But none dared, after seeing the fate of Shakalya. This ends canto 3.

Canto no. 4 continues on the theme of metaphysical and theological discussion in the assembly of king Janak. In Brahmins 1 and 2, the king asked the sage to further enlighten him about the tenets discussed in the open assembly in the previous canto. At this request the sage asked the king to tell him first what he had learnt from other wise ones. The answers of Janak that some had advised him to worship and honour Brahm who has revealed his stupendous majesty and powers in such individual faculties in creation as Vak (voice and the faculty of speech), Pran (breath; the vital life giving forces represented by the vital winds or the air element), Mana (mind and heart and their special virtues), Chakshu (eye and the faculty of sight), and Srotra (ears and the faculty of hearing) was debunked by Yagyavalkya who told him that these are not the holistic and all-inclusive definitions of the 'Viraat', or the vast and measureless form of Brahm who surpasses these limited versions. The essential

conscious factor that operates in these individual entities, lending them their validity, importance and vitality, and without which they would be useless, is the supreme truthful authority that is worthy of adoration and worship. This authority is known as Brahm. Janak became enlightened and overwhelmed with gratitude, feeling fulfilled and contented. He offered his entire kingdom to the sage as a gesture of his thankfulness and gratitude. This explains how and why Yagyavalkya had acquired such immense property which he had wished to divide between his two wives, Maitreyi and Katyayani, in canto no. 2, Brahmin no. 4.

Then the king accepted his discipleship, and the sage enlightens him about the transcendental knowledge of Brahm and Atma with all their intangible and astounding characteristic virtues in Brahmins 3 and 4 that carry further the discussion between the sage and the king to elaborate on the Atma's ethereal, sublime, supreme, transcendental, self-illuminated and blissful form; it goes on to describe the different states of existence of consciousness, viz. the waking, the dreaming, the deep sleeping and the transcendental state of perpetual bliss known as Turiya, and how profound realisation of the essential 'truth' leads to awakening, which in turn provides liberation and deliverance to the soul of the creature. In Brahmin 4, the sage elucidates upon the fact that Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) is not something obtained after death when the soul is supposed to go to heaven, but a wise and enlightened view is that a person can obtain it here itself while alive in this world by being dispassionate about the deluding world, by doing deeds selflessly and without involvement (so that there is no accumulation of their results or consequences that would force a person to undergo punishments or enjoy rewards of these deeds), and acquiring of wisdom of the essential truth about the conscious 'self' which is the Atma and Brahm personified. This leads to self-realisation and blissful existence.

Brahmin 5 picks up once again on the metaphysical and theological preaching of Yagyavalkya for the benefit of his wife Maitreyi as described earlier in canto no. 2, Brahmin no. 4, and further elaborates on Brahm and Atma. Queries raised by the wife (Maitreyi) are fully satisfied by the sage, and finally he (Yagyavalkya) takes to Sanyas, the fourth stage in the life of a man when he completely renounces all his worldly activities, active life and duties, and takes to the renunciate way of life like that of a friar, a mendicant or a reclusive ascetic. This episode shows that Yagyavalkya implemented what he had preached the king about Sanyas by formally renouncing the material attractions of the world.

The last Brahmin 6 of this canto lists the long tradition of preachers who were great exponents of the knowledge of Brahm, called 'Brahm Vidya'. It lists the names of all the wise teachers who taught and expounded upon the philosophy propounded by Yagyavalkya. This ends canto no. 4.

Canto no. 5, in its fifteen Brahmins, marks the beginning of the 'Khil Kand', because its first verse invokes the esoteric mystical formulae symbolised by the word 'Khum' (the Sanskrit letter Kha with a dot on top) to indicate the sky element with all its magnificent virtues, such as being fathomless, measureless, eternal, infinite, pure, incorruptible etc. in Brahmin 1.

The most interesting episode described in Brahmin 2 here is that Prajapati Brahma, the creator, advised all the three sons of his—the Gods, the Asurs (the non-Gods and demons), and the humans—using the same Sanskrit letter 'Da' (द) regarding what they should treat as the best ideal to be implemented in their lives. The Gods thought that Brahma had advised them to have the virtue of 'Daman', literally

keeping the sense organs and the mind intellect complex under control, or crushing and vanquishing their wayward and restless tendencies. The non-Gods or Asurs, on the other hand, thought that they were advised to inculcate the virtue of 'Dayaa', literally the virtue of having mercy, which they lacked. The humans meanwhile thought that the letter 'Da' stood for 'Daan', or the grand virtue of giving charity and alms, and making donations.

Brahmins 3 to 12 describe the various forms in which the supreme, transcendental and sublime 'Truthful Being' known as Brahm can be adored and worshipped. The Brahm residing in the form of the 'Hridaya' (heart with all its characteristic virtues) is described in Brahmin 3-4, as 'Apaha' (water element), as 'Prajapati Brahma' (the creator) and as 'Devas' (Gods), as 'Aditya' (Sun God) and the faculty of sight present in the eyes, and as the three worlds represented by the words 'Bhu' (earth), 'Bhuvha' (sky) and 'Swaha' (heaven) are described in Brahmin 5, as 'Mana' (mind-heart complex; the thoughts and emotions of a creature) in Brahmin 6, as 'Vidyut' (the electric with its stupendous potentials) in Brahmin 7, as 'Vak' (speech, words, the faculty of speech) in Brahmin 8, and as the 'Vaishwanar Agni' (a form of eternal celestial fire) and the 'Naad' (the cosmic sound produced as a result of the energy of the waves created in cosmic ether heated by this fire) in Brahmin 9.

The path followed by a person after death is described in Brahmins 10 and 11.

Brahmin 12 narrates how Brahm manifests itself as the essential life-giving energy contained in the nutrition provided by the food eaten by the creatures, known as the 'Pran of the food' (i.e. the life infusing vital energy present in the food and extracted from it to make the creature live and performs its duties). Brahmin 13 says that the essential element that gives the various hymns of the different Vedas their mystical energy, their stupendous spiritual force, their great potentials, powers, strength and authority, is known as 'Pran' of those hymns. All these forms of Brahm are to be worshipped, honoured, revered and praised with equal intensity and dedication.

The concept of the elevation or the upward movement of the spirit after death is also described. The famous Gayatri Mantra used for doing Japa (persistent and constant recitation of any holy group of words or letters having mystical powers) is described in detail in Brahmin 14, while the last Brahmin 15 describes that 'Truthful Brahm' as a fount of dazzling and splendorous light which is equivalent to the splendour of a raging fire. The worshipper requests that Truthful Brahm to withdraw his blinding light so that he can see him and worship him, which is a metaphoric way of saying that the seeker wishes to witness that Supreme Being, but its glories and majesty are so profound that he is left awed and spellbound by them.

The excellence and supremacy of 'Pran' over all other elements of creation is established in Canto 6 having five Brahmins. Brahmin 1 describes how it was established that Pran is the best and the superior element in creation using the episode when all the organs and their patron Gods left the body one by one thinking that the body would not live without them. As it transpired, it did not happen, and the other organs managed to survive without the presence of one of their compatriots. But when finally Pran (the breath and the vital wind) decided to leave the body, all were crestfallen and dumbfounded because they realised that they cannot survive without the presence of Pran in the body. This established the supremacy of Pran over other Gods representing the different sense perceptions and functions of the body of the creature. [This episode is also described in Chandogya Upanishad, 5/1/1—5/1/15.]

Brahmin no. 2 describes the famed conversation between the proud sage Shwetketu and the erudite and enlightened king Pravahan wherein the king preached Shwetketu and his father-cum-moral preceptor sage Aaruni about the metaphysical interpretation of the concepts of birth and death, the path taken by a person upon death, as well as about the importance and significance of the legendary ‘Panch Agni’, or the five great legendary holy fires. [This concept is also a part of Chandogya Upanishad, 5/3—5/10 of Sam Veda tradition.]

Brahmins 3 and 4 deal with ‘Sri-Manth’ and ‘Putra-Manth’, which are the rituals observed in relation to the process of doing a formal fire-sacrifice, and treating the process of procreation as a form of sacrificial worship ordained by the supreme Lord of creation in order to carry forward the process of creation respectively. The procedure of procreation has been described in minute detail here, but the emphasis is not on sexual gratification but on the divine mandate, and therefore the entire process is to be treated as a holy fire-sacrifice.

Finally, Brahmin 5 lists names of the sages or teachers of this system of worship and philosophy in the pattern that resembles Brahmin 6 of Canto 4 regarding the ‘Madhu’ school of worship and philosophy.

This Upanishad has many parallels in other Upanishadic texts as well. For example, the process of evolution of the basic elements (earth, water, fire, air or Pran) and the use of Udgith by the Gods to worship the supreme Pran (canto 1) as well as the episode describing how king Pravahan had preached sage Shwetketu and his father Aaruni on the metaphysics of the legendary five holy fires as well as the process of procreation (as described in canto 6 here) appears also in Chandogya Upanishad. The dialogue between king Ajatshatru and Gargi (as in canto no. 2) has a parallel in Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition. We must note here that Upanishads are not copyrights of any individual sage or seer or philosopher. Each teacher-philosopher explains the same metaphysical and theological concept to his disciple in his own unique way, and for the line of disciples who follow his teachings, the texts propounded by him become sacrosanct and the main text for them, while the rest of the interpretations of those metaphysical and theological concepts become like reference books for these disciples. That is why, any given concept is found repeated in many Upanishads with small variation depending upon the aspect which the Upanishadic seer wishes to highlight. In today’s world also, we have a main textbook prescribed in a school or college, and there are a number of reference books for an elaborate study of a subject. Thus we see that this ‘Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad’ covers a wide swathe of metaphysical, theological and spiritual concepts, making it a unique treatise of profound importance and significance.

The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad appears to have been compiled in three installments. The reason is that at three independent places the name of all the sages or seers who were great exponents of this philosophy have been listed. Normally such list is appended at the end of one work, and its inclusion three times in one Upanishad only goes to prove that there were originally three volumes, each having this list at its end. Later, the sages/seers decided to incorporate them all in one volume so that a comprehensive study can be made. The list of the great ancient exponents and teachers of this magnificent and fascinating Upanishad appear in Canto 2, Brahmin 6; Canto 4, Brahmin 6; and Canto 6, Brahmin 5.

There is another plausible reason. The Shukla Yajur Veda was taught to sage Yagyavalkya by the Sun God. The sage then taught it to his line of disciples who might have branched out to different places. Then they recorded what they had been taught by their own teachers. Later on they discovered that the original teacher was

same individual known as Yagyavalkya. So they decided to compile the entire text, earlier existing in three separate volumes—viz. Cantos 1 and 2 as one volume, Cantos 3 and 4 as another one volume, and Cantos 5 and 6 as the third volume—into one single compilation because they had a single source.

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-----Shanti Paath-----

See appendix no.1 of this volume for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

Canto 1/Brahmin 1

[The first Brahmin uses the metaphor of the sacrificial horse whose entire body and its individual parts are symbolic of each and every single unit of the visible creation as it came into being at the time of creation when the creator had performed the cosmic fire-sacrifice to initiate the process of creation. The word 'Ashwa' meaning a horse stands for such virtues as speed and energy, vitality and strength, agility and steadfastness. The word for a sacrificial ritual is 'Medhya', wherein this horse is sacrificed for achieving some great objective. This sacrifice does not mean killing of an animal as such, but to harness the sublime and subtle qualities present latently and inherently in the cosmos for the benefit of its creatures. In other words, the creator had utilised the auspicious and sublime virtues of consciousness, life-giving energy, vitality, strength, agility, speed and steadfastness that were intrinsically present in the primordial cosmic jelly to mould a vast creation. The sacrifice that he did was only a symbolic one to harness and utilise these virtues in a coordinated manner and put them to a purposeful use. It must be noted that a lot of symbolism is used here.]

1. OM salutations! The Usha (dawn, daybreak hours; the time of the sun rise) is symbolic of the head of the Sacrificial Horse which is a personification of all the auspicious virtues and qualities present in creation. [The sun-rise is a metaphor for the emergence of the hitherto dormant cosmic energy, vitality and strength, as well as the light of self-luminous consciousness having wisdom, erudition and enlightenment as its inherent virtue, that pervades throughout the creation, pulsating and flowing through it, but which was lying dormant and hidden in the darkness of night prior to the rise of the sun. This darkness signifies the ignorance and delusions that engulf the entire creation just like the dark shroud of night.]

The Sun is its eye; the Wind/Air element is its Pran (breath); the Vaishwanar Agni (the celestial all-pervading fire element in creation; the Fire God) is its open mouth: the Samwatsar (a period of twelve months; a period of one full year) is its Atma (the soul, the truthful identity); the Duloka (heavens where Gods reside) is its back; the Antariksha (the entire void of space between the heavens and the earth) is its stomach/abdomen; the Prithivi (the earth) is its pedestal; the Dishas (the Northern and Southern hemispheres of the celestial globe; the four directions—north, east, south and west) are its two sides or flanks (the left and the right; the anterior and the posterior); the Avantar (the angular directions –north east, south east, south west and north west) are its ribs; the Ritus (seasons) are

the various parts of its body; the Months and their Lunar cycles are its joints (such as ankles, knees, elbows, wrists, finger joints and toe joints etc.); the Night and Day are its Pratistha (established glory, majesty, grandeur, dignity, esteem and visible fame represented by the legs, because the legs help one to stand up and be counted; they act as the pedestal or a flagstaff upon which the glory of someone stands); the different Nakshatras (stars and planets) are its bones; the Clouds in the sky represent its flesh; the Sikta (literally 'sand' and other coarse powdered matter, but here meaning sub-particles that have not yet formed into proper materials of the creation) is the half-digested, pre-faecal matter present in its stomach; the Rivers represent its veins and nerves; the Hills and Mountains are its liver (because they produce minerals dissolved in water of the rivers flowing down their slopes, and they harbour forests producing herbs; like the liver in the body, they help to clean the atmosphere of poisonous gases and other toxic substances) and heart (because the trees 'breathe' life by consuming carbon-dioxide and giving out oxygen), the Herbs and Vegetations are the hairs on its body, the Rising Sun symbolises its body above the navel, while the Declining Sun (about to set) symbolises the lower part of its body; the streak of Electric (lightening in the sky) is like its yawning; the Rumbling and Thundering of the dark Cloud is like the shaking or fluttering of its body; the Rain symbolises the passing of its urine; and its Neighing is the speech or the spoken sound or word (1).

[Note :- This 'sacrificial horse' is visualised as the macrocosmic form of the Viraat Purush. The creator, Prajapati Brahma, mentally did a fire-sacrifice to start the process of creation. The fire-sacrifice in which a horse is the sacrificial offering is called an 'Ashwamedh Yagya'. Symbolism is extensively used here to imagine the entire creation to be present in that horse. Since Prajapati had performed, albeit mentally, this sacrifice to kindle or ignite the stupendous forces that set in motion the chain of creation in motion, the horse-sacrifice is considered the greatest endeavour for those persons who aspire to achieve glory, fame, majesty and supremacy which are equivalent to that possessed by Brahma who had done such a sacrifice that enabled him to create an entire creation from virtually nothing. This section describes the process of creation in a symbolic way. This horse is not an animal as such, but is a symbol of the Viraat Purush who has manifested himself as each individual creature of this vast creation.]

2. The 'day' emerged first representing the Mahima (glory, fame, majesty, greatness, grandeur, importance, magnitude, dignity and magnificence) of this cosmic Ashwa (horse) that symbolised the Viraat Purush (the supreme Lord symbolising the macrocosmic gross body of creation). To the east of this Ashwa (represented by the rising sun) is the womb-like ocean (from which the sun appears to rise at dawn). The 'night' appeared as the second Mahima of this Ashwa, and there is an ocean to the west of it (where the sun appears to set)¹.

This macrocosmic Viraat Lord represented by the sacrificial horse carried the Gods in his form known as 'Haye', the Gandharvas (semi Gods who are celestial musicians and considered to be junior to the main Gods) in its form as 'Vaaji', the non-Gods (called the Asurs or the demons) in its form known as 'Arwaa', and the humans in its form known as 'Ashwa'².

The ocean (representing the primary cosmic water element) is like its kith and kin, and it is like the cosmic womb from where this horse originated³. (2).

[Note—(a) ¹These two oceans represent the water element of creation in which the entire creation was conceived and moulded, because water is an essential requirement for conception of life and its sustenance. No life is possible without water. Even today, scientists search for signs of water in far off planets when they search for life there. This is the reason why Lord Vishnu, the macrocosmic manifestation of Brahm and a personification of the Viraat Purush according to the Purans, reclines on the Kshir Sagar, which is the celestial ocean of milk. The entire creation has been revealed from this Viraat, and his reclining on the surface of the ocean is a symbolic representation of the cosmic primordial liquid from which the creation came into being. Further, the ‘day’ represents the auspicious and noble virtues in creation, the qualities that are marked by the light of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment which show the correct path to the creatures in this creation, while ‘night’ stands for ignorance and delusions, lack of knowledge and awareness. These two opposite qualities are both present in creation, and this fact is symbolised by saying that day and night represented the two Mahimas of this cosmic Ashwa.

²All these words—Haye, Vaaji, Arwaa and Ashwa—mean a horse, but they have subtle differences in meaning. ‘Haye’ refers to decline and decimation of worldly attractions and attachments. So those who have these virtues are equivalent to Gods, and they are borne by the Lord as revered Gods. ‘Vaaji’ refers to those medicinal plants that bestow vigour and vitality to enable the person to enjoy worldly pleasures and indulge in sensual gratification. The Lord has to bear even such elements in creation. The word ‘Arwaa’ indicates the quality of being aggressive and mischievous, which are possessed by the demons, and since they are also part of this creation, the Lord has also to bear them. Finally, ‘Ashwa’ refers to someone who eats a lot, as is evident from the fact that horses eat a lot and can even digest what they eat. This quality is possessed by humans and animals—they are inveterate eaters. So the Lord had to carry such eating fiends also as part of the baggage of creation.

³That is, the primary water element represented by the ocean is so elementary for this creation that it is like the near family of the Viraat, and since this Viraat himself had its origin in the cosmic primordial jelly that existed at the time of creation, this symbolic ocean is likened to the cosmic womb from where everything that exists originated.

(b) Since the narrative revolves around the symbolic horse-sacrifice, it is pertinent to note their significance here. Two pots are kept for various sacrificial rituals—one made of gold is put in the front, and the other of silver is put at the rear of the horse. The pot that is kept behind the horse is made of silver representing the bright light of the full moon, which in turn represents night, while the one in the front is golden representing the brilliant light of the midday sun, representing day. This verse has a lot of symbolism.

The placement of the two pots, gold and silver, indicates that the best of materials available in existence are used to honour the Viraat in the form of the sacrificial horse. The golden pot is a metaphor for the sun because of its shining, bright yellow colour, and therefore of the rising of the day, while the silver pot stands for the white colour of the moon, and therefore of the night.

These two pots represent the two aspects of doing a sacrifice, one standing for the ignorance and delusions that existed before the sacrifice as represented by the pot behind the horse and symbolising the darkness of a night, and the other pot put in front of the horse stands for the light of the day which represents the good name, glory, fame and majesty obtained as a result of enlightenment and self-realisation that should be the main object of any religious pursuit.

The sun symbolising the light of enlightenment and knowledge rises from the bowl of darkness of night symbolising ignorance and delusions. This establishes the fact that though the creature appears to be ignorant and deluded, the light of enlightenment, wisdom and self-awareness is inherently present in it though it might lie in a dormant form.

These two pots are filled with water representing the ocean mentioned in this verse. The presence of the ocean symbolises the primordial cosmic fluid from which the Viraat emerged, and in which the creation would finally dissolve. Therefore, this metaphoric ocean preceded the day and proceeded the sunset. The ocean is treated as a 'Yoni', literally a womb, because it is in the womb that the embryo develops and nourished, and from where it finally emerges as a living creature, here represented by the horse. The ocean represents the cosmic primordial fluid that sustained and nourished the cosmic embryo, called the Hiranyagarbha, until it emerged as the Viraat Purush. At the micro level, this Viraat became the individual creature. And according to this Upanishad, this Viraat was represented as the horse. The Viraat Purush is imagined in the body of the sacrificial horse. The entire world, the visible creation, is imagined as its various parts in their fundamental forms. Since the Viraat 'carries or bears' the burden of the creation created by the creator Brahma, because the former (Viraat Purush as Vishnu) is a sustainer, nourisher and protector of the creation, it is very apt that he is likened to a 'horse' which carries the burden on its back and helps the rider to reach his destination. Viraat Purush's or Lord Vishnu's form as a horse is known as 'Hayagriv' (हयग्रीव), literally the one with a horse-like neck. Perhaps the sea horse is a symbolic remnant of that cosmic Hayagriv.]

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Canto 1/Brahmin 2

1. [This Brahmin describes the genesis of the various elements of creation. The supreme transcendental Lord desired to withdraw his tentacles which he had spread earlier in the form of this creation. This desire in him can be likened to the 'hunger' element, as any form of desire and wish is tantamount to hunger, because then the person who has this desire endeavours to take action in order to satisfy his hunger for the thing desired. As a result of this cosmic desire, 'death' resulted because when everything was withdrawn, there was no activity and signs of life left, and the state of inactivity is tantamount to death. When the Lord decided to restart this creation, he simply unfolded his tentacles, and the cycle of creation was set in motion. Therefore, in effect, it is an oscillating cycle of birth, death and rebirth.]

In the beginning there was nothing here (i.e. there was a complete void; there was no life). Everything was covered or enveloped with 'Mrityu' or a death-like lifelessness or inactivity; everything was engulfed in 'Ashanaaye' (hunger). Ashanaaye is equivalent to Mrityu¹. It (the primordial primary eternal transcendental entity that existed even before

the creation came into being, and it was in this entity that the previous creation had collapsed at the time of its doomsday)² had a 'Mana' (a thought that occurred to it)³ that it should have an Atma (i.e. it thought 'let me have a conscious life')⁴.

For that purpose (i.e. in order to fulfill its desire to have an Atma signifying life), it offered a ceremonial worship. For the purpose of this worship, water was needed because water is sipped during religious worship, and so that transcendental entity made an effort to create 'Apaha' or the water element⁵.

'I have got 'K'⁶ (क—the seed or root word indicating water or liquid) while doing this ceremonial worship. Hence, this is the essence of life called 'Arka'. The word Arka means mother tincture, or the raw extract or juice of anything.'

Since this Apaha gave immense satisfaction in the sense that the worship was successfully completed (otherwise no water element would have come into being), and the fact that this achievement set in motion the chain of events that led to the establishment of life in this creation, this 'essence' or Arka of life present in the water element was deemed to be the Fire element⁷.

A person who realises or understands the sublime and subtle importance and significance of this Arka (essence of life) is able to acquire certain happiness and contentedness (1).

[Note :-¹The word 'Ashanaaye' (अशनाय) means a desire or need for food; it also refers to hunger. When one is hungry, he kills for food, he goes out to hunt for food, or even kills another person to feed his own stomach if that another person appears to stand between the hungry man and the food.

The wider connotation of this word covers any kind of yearnings and greed, any overwhelming passions and ambitions that might make a man blind to everything else, which virtually eclipses his wisdom and judgment, and impels him to recklessly pursue his objectives and go for the kill to accomplish success in his objective, oblivious of the consequences. Figuratively speaking therefore, hunger is tantamount to death because all such noble virtues such as wisdom and reasoning, fortitude and equanimity, tolerance and self restraint etc. are totally eclipsed, and a life without virtues and values and principles is as good as dead. Hence, hunger is tantamount to death, specially 'death of wisdom and intellect' that advises a person to follow righteousness and auspiciousness instead of blindly hankering for worldly gains.

Another interpretation of the word hunger as being synonymous with death is that if hunger is not satisfied, it leads to death. During famines, large numbers of people die due to hunger.

²Principles of science state that matter and energy do not end but only changes their forms. When the creation apparently 'ends', it only goes into a hibernating mode, and when the time is conducive, it virtually yawns and comes back to life. The primary cosmic energy that drives the dynamo of the creation does not die or dissipate as such, but only becomes latent and dormant like fire which is inherently present in a dormant form in the fire wood, only to leap up when ignited. The spark that ignited this cosmic fire of creation was the 'desire or wish' in that primary transcendental entity known as Brahm to create and have a life in the form of an Atma or the conscious factor. This 'desire' led to the

extinguishing of the creation in its previous version, but that earlier desire was the result of overwhelming worldly passions and greed, leading to death. When a man acquires any material gain, his desires do not end there, but this success fuels his fire for more material gains, and this makes him blind towards what is righteous and what is unrighteous, thereby leading to his ultimate downfall symbolised by death. But the 'desire' referred to at the time of new creation was an auspicious one because it was like a man repenting for his sins and misdemeanors, and then his desires to be given a new opportunity to do right and auspicious things. It is another matter that by and by he forgets his resolutions and reverts back to his bad old habits, which lead to the end of this new creation when the time comes. This simple illustration explains why we have an endless cycle of birth and death.

So the eternal, imperishable, transcendental, self-capable, self-illuminated, and self-sustaining primary force of Nature that never dies any death as the word is understood to mean, is known as Brahm, and it survives the conventional way the creation comes to an end at the time of doomsday. It is in this primary entity known as the Brahm that the creation collapses at that time, only to be revived when that entity desires to do so.

³The first thing that came into being before the rest of the gross creation came into existence was 'Mana' or the mind, because it is the mind that can think of any thing and have any desire; without mind no intelligent and creative activity such as creation of the world is possible. Since the mind has no physical form as it existed only as a 'desire or wish' in that primary entity, it is called the subtle body of creation. This Mana had two components—the mind which had the desire, and its superior component the intellect which found the means to implement that desire by intelligent use of the available ingredients to initiate the complex process of creation. To illustrate, an intelligent man, when given a task, would go about it by properly utilizing the available resources and putting them to an optimum use. So the mind decided to do a sacrifice which is like saying it endeavored to fulfill the desire in the supreme entity by initiating some experiment in a laboratory to obtain success in fulfilling this desire to create life.

⁴Life is synonymous with consciousness present in a creature. This 'consciousness' is called Atma, and that is why life and Atma are synonymous with each other. To illustrate, suppose a man is breathing and therefore technically alive, but is lying in a deep state of coma when all his conscious functions are as good as dead. We call this man 'as being good as dead' because his consciousness is non-functional.

⁵The first element that came into being as result of this cosmic experiment was 'water element'. Even today scientists look for traces of water, and nothing else, to establish the presence of life in distant planets. So this water was the harbinger of cosmic life. But water is in itself inert and cold, whereas life is symbolised by warmth and vibrancy represented by the fire element.

The 'ocean' mentioned in canto 1/Brahmin 1, and the 'Apaha' or Arka mentioned in this verse here are both indicative of the basic necessity of life after death, which is water. Without water, no new life can ever be expected to emerge after death. Water is the primary and basic necessity for life. After the deluge of the doomsday, when new life makes its appearance on the planet or anywhere else in the cosmos, the basic ingredient needed for it is water. When scientists of modern day search

for life in the far corners of the universe, in far away stars for instance, they search for signs of water first.

⁶The letter 'K' (क) is the first consonant in the Sanskrit alphabet. Hence it is used as an acronym for water, a symbol for water, because water was the first element created. 'K' also means happiness, contentedness and comfort. Hence, realizing that the prayers to acquire life in its basic ingredient, known as the Atma, have been fruitful, Prajapati Brahma felt happy, contented and comforted.

⁷It is in this water that 'life' takes shape. Water is inherently cool, while life needs energy and warmth, which in turn is a metaphor for the 'fire' element. Hence, though apparently cool and an antidote to fire, water harbors life in its bosom in a latent form, which in turn means that it has the fire element concealed in its bosom in a latent form because life cannot be sustained without warmth, heat and energy, which are all the various terms used to describe the Fire element.

So the 'fire element' remains concealed in the water element as its fundamental life-giving and life-sustaining factor. In other words, fire is inherently present in water in a latent and dormant form; it lends water its vitality and strength to conceive and sustain life. It is obvious because it is observed that even when the ocean is frigid cold on the surface and a thick layer of ice floats on its surface, a vibrant marine life thrives underneath that cold surface. Life cannot exist without warmth, and had it not been for the presence of the fire element inherently in the water element, no life would have survived below a thick coat of ice that floats on the surface of the ocean at some places on earth.]

2. [This verse describes the evolution of earth and fire from the primordial fluid known as 'water' or 'Apaha' which was the essence or 'Arka' of life.] 'Apaha' (water) is 'Arka' (the extract, juice or essence of life). The gross parts (sediments, the metals and other trace element dissolved in it, the coarser particles) of that primordial water (the primary fluid of life) accumulated on its surface and they became solidified in the form of earth.

When 'earth' was produced or formed in the manner described herein, the great effort that was made and the severe exertion that the cosmic creator had undergone manifested themselves as the 'fire' element on the surface of this earth (2).

[Note :- Prajapati Brahma, the creator of the visible world, when he wished to create, had the cosmic primordial fluid or water as the only raw material to start with. He churned it vigorously, like done when milk is churned to produce butter which floats on the top. This solid part formed the earth. That is why in the Purans, the celestial ocean upon which Lord Vishnu is depicted to be reclining on the bedstead made of the coiled legendary python called Sheshnath, is known as 'Kshir Sagar', literally meaning 'the ocean of milk' because this vigorous cosmic churning created so much froth that the primordial liquid appeared to be as white as milk.

In another scenario, the milk-like primordial, primary cosmic fluid was aloud to coagulate, and the solidified parts formed the earth which literally floated on the ocean of the primary cosmic liquid. That is why the earth constitutes only a fraction of the water present in visible creation that we observe on this planet of ours.

This diligent exercise made the creator tired, so he slept like he was 'dead'. During his tiredness-induced weary sleep, he ejaculated his 'Tej' or his vital energy in the form of the cosmic semen, which in turn

transformed itself into 'fire'. In modern parlance, we may regard this Tej as the vital spark that sets off any chain reaction in a nuclear reactor, or any other chemical reaction that any student of science is aware of.

[Refer Canto 5, Brahmin 5 in this context.]

3. He (the cosmic creator) divided or cleaved himself into three parts (like a single cell Amoeba or Paramecium or Bacteria cleaving or dividing itself into two parts to produce an image of its own self). One part was transformed into 'Aditya' (the celestial Sun), one part became 'Vayu' (the wind or air), and the third part became 'Pran' (the vital breath; the life giving wind; the spark of life, vitality, vigour, strength and energy).

[Now the Upanishadic sage describes the Viraat Purush, literally the vast, colossus, all-encompassing and all-pervading macrocosmic form of the supreme transcendental Lord, who formed the gross body of this entire creation. This Viraat is the cosmic Lord in the form of Vishnu who reclines on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as Kshir Sagar.]

The eastern direction represented the head of that cosmic creator (the Viraat Purush); the two angular directions such as the Ishan and Agneya (i.e. the north-east side and the south-east side respectively) are its fore-arms; the western direction represents its hind part called the tail end (i.e. the appendix); while the two directions called Vayabya and Nairitya (i.e. the north-west side and the south-west side respectively) are its hind-legs or the thighs. The south and north directions are its two flanks or sides; the Duloka (heavens) is its back (the upper part of the body); the Antariksha (the space of the sky above the earth) is its abdomen or stomach; and the earth is its heart.

This Viraat (vast, colossus, all-incorporating and all-inclusive) form of the creator's cosmic body rests in the water element of creation. A person who (is wise, erudite, scholarly and enlightened enough) knows this gets respect and honour wherever he goes (3).

[Note :- The primordial, primary egg is also known as 'Hiranyagarbh', literally, the golden cosmic egg. From it evolved the Viraat Purush. These words signify the initial stages of the creation of the universe at the macro level. They are therefore employed for Lord Vishnu as well as for Brahma in the Purans. The word Prajapati means the husband or guardian of creation, or from whom the subjects of creation were produced and who sustains and nourishes them. Even as child's existence is because of the vital spark of life provided by the father's sperm, but the actual development of the embryo takes place inside a mother's womb and nourished by her body fluids, the gross body of the Viraat was nourished by the cosmic fluid in the womb of the cosmic mother, called Mother Nature, which was the female aspect of the supreme, transcendental authority known as Brahm. The Hiranyagarbha was the subtle body of this setup; the Viraat was the gross body, while the Ishwar or the supreme Lord was the causal body because it was Ishwar who was the cause of all this to come into being. The Atma which resided in this causal body, i.e. the soul of the creation, is known as Brahm.]

Mythology gives different versions of how creation came into being. Without going into specifics, the broad outline remains the same in all versions. The differences in detail are because the different sages and seers had visualised the whole process in their minds and had interpreted them in their own way, giving rise to differences in opinions and views. Even in our modern times, various theories of science go on getting

changed and updated when new discoveries are made, so much so that often well established facts come tumbling down in the face of newer discoveries. Knowledge that evolves and which is not stagnant has freshness and vitality as compared to rigid, staid models which cannot be discussed and are not supposed to change with the evolution of time. Life itself means something going forward, something moving, something perpetually changing, incorporating and assimilating all the changes that occur in the course of its forward movement. Stagnancy is equivalent to death, while vibrancy and flourish are synonyms of life.]

4. [The creation of 'Samvatsar', literally a full year representing one full cycle of birth and death, and 'Vak' or the faculty of speech, is described here.]

He (the creator or the Viraat Purush) desired that another form of his body be produced¹. [The earlier forms were earth, water, wind/air and sun representing fire.] Hence, that primary entity representing death² in the form of hunger (as explained in verse no. 1 above) created a symbolic union between the Mana (mind and heart) and Vani (the faculty of speech). The 'seed' or the fiery element produced by this union was called 'Samvatsar'. Prior to this, there was no such thing as Samvatsar³ (i.e., there was no fixed time for life to last; there was immortality, eternity and infinity).

That primary being kept that Samvatsar, which was its offspring, in its cosmic womb till the time of its birth arrived. This newly born infant was known as Kaal (death personified). The parent was so hungry that it wished to eat this newly born Kaal⁴, and so it opened its mouth wide to gobble it up⁵. Scared stiff, the infant cried aloud, uttering the words 'Bhan'. This transformed into speech or Vak (4).

[Note—¹There is another interpretation of this event. Prajapati was lying like a sleeping entity after creating earth and ejaculating fire in the form of his Tej as described in the earlier verse. He represented 'death' because he was lying lifeless in his weary sleep after having ejaculated his vitality in the form of his Tej or semen. So he decided to have a second body, or get re-born, and acquire a new lease of fresh life.

²The creator is likened to death personified, or Mrityu, because he was lying motionless, as if dead, in sleep after the exertion of creation. In his sleep he imagined that the two entities of creation, i.e. the subtle mind and the faculty of speech had an intercourse, resulting in the creation of Samvatsar. When he woke up, he felt so hungry that he wished to eat what was readily available, and so opened the mouth to gobble up this Samvatsar. Terrified, the latter cried aloud, and this was the first manifestation of what would eventually evolve as speech.

³The word *Samvatsar* refers to one full year. This is a metaphor for one full cycle of birth and death of a creature. A man's life consists of many years or Samvatsars, each a complete unit with all the seasons. These years indicate the numerous lives that a man takes before he finds final rest in the form of death, the latter being a metaphor for final liberation and deliverance of his physical body from the torments that he had been subjected to during his sojourn in this world, as well as for the soul that finds emancipation and salvation by getting rid of this body at the time of death and escaping from its shackling effects.

The symbolic union of the mind and speech is indicative of their coordination and this was necessary to enable the creature to live

fruitfully in this world, because without speaking, life would have been very difficult to live in practical terms. The mind enabled the creature to decide what and when to speak. But as it happened, this speech more often than not created such a situation when the creature wasted his vital energy in fruitless chatter, besides causing so much ill-will and animosity due to his inciting and fiery speech that there were strife and hatred all around, resulting in the peaceful and blissful life coming to a symbolic end. Absence of peace and tranquility for the soul was tantamount to its death.

⁴It is pertinent to note here that the word for death, i.e. Kaal, has the letter *Ka*, and this letter is the seed for the water element as described in verse no.1. That is why it is visualised that at the time of doomsday, there is a deluge caused by heaving ocean or incessant rain that submerges everything.

⁵The imagery reminds one of a she serpent nourishing her eggs. When the eggs hatch, the mother snake gobbles up the wriggling and struggling tiny reptiles as soon as they come out from the hatched egg, because she is very hungry. Only those few infant snakes which manage to slither away out of her reach, are able to escape and survive. A lot of imagination and apparently mixed-up imagery has been used here.

The concept of Samvatsar is also elucidated in Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 14 of this Upanishad.]

5. [Creation of the Vedas, as also of the humans and animals are described here, besides the fact that no matter how many creatures die, the hunger pangs of 'death' are never satiated.]

He (death personified) thought to himself, 'If I kill this terrified infant (Samvatsar born as Kaal) then it will be only a little bit of food (that will not satisfy my hunger)'. Therefore, he desisted from gobbling it up (i.e. Kaal or 'death' escaped from being killed at the time of its creation).

Using his mind and speech, he (the creator) created the rest of the creation which was diverse and multifarious—such as the Vedas consisting of the Rig, the Yajur and the Sam, the various Chandas (which are poetical composition styles used to compose the hymns of the Vedas), Yagya (the religious rituals, especially the fire-sacrifices), Praja (the humans who were the subjects of this creation and who would use the Vedas, composed through the medium of the Chandas, and do Yagyas or fire-sacrifices during which they would offer offerings to the sacrificial fire so that Prajapati could find satisfaction from his hunger), and Pashu (the animals who would serve the humans in this divine effort and would be used by him to serve Prajapati).

Paradoxically, he (the creator personified as sleeping death) wished to eat each of his own creation (as they came into being one by one, in order to satisfy his hunger; see also note of verse no. 4 above). The creator Prajapati, who represented death because he wished to eat each of his own offspring as soon as they were created, was known as Aditi, the Parent of creation. [This Aditi was both the mother of Gods as well as the father of creation.]

The fact (or the inherent and intrinsic virtue or characteristic feature) that 'it eats everything' (i.e. that it has the ability to bring to an end what it can create) gives Aditi (the parent of creation) its speciality,

its uniqueness that delineates it from the rest of the authorities in creation. It gives it its strength, authority, majesty, powers, importance and significance (that it spares none and can annihilate everything that exists without exceptions)¹.

Anyone who knows about the special quality possessed by this Aditi (parent of creation), which sets it apart from the rest of the creation, is able to enjoy all the benefits offered by the creation (even as the parent enjoys all the benefits that accrue with having a good and obedient family). He is able and entitled to enjoy the fruits of creation and eat everything (because he realises that he is not harming anything, but the material thing and eatable food that has come his way are destined for him, they are meant for his consumption, and he should have no compunctions about using or eating them² (5).

[Note---¹Here, the creator is the immutable, eternal, infinite, almighty, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, supreme and transcendental Lord of creation, known as Ishwar or Brahm, who is one and the only one of his kind though he had been assigned different names—including Aditi and Mrityu—by the scriptures for performing different functions. The entire creation has unfolded from him, and at the end of its tenure it would fold itself back into that same Ishwar. This explains the term *death personified* used here for the creator, for it is the creator who brings about the end of the creation, and no one else. The authority to conclude and recreate is the exclusive domain and prerogative of Brahm. The allusion to *eating everything as soon as it was born* is simply a figurative way of saying that everything that comes into existence has a predetermined life span; nothing can exist forever. The creator ensured this so that the offspring does not go out of his hands!

Everything that has been created by the supreme creator exist only till the time the creator wishes it to exist; as soon as the creator wants, it can put a full stop to this vast creation even without notice. In other words, the creator reserves the right to create and conclude everything as per its wish, and no element of creation can supersede the supreme creator.

We must remember that Prajapati was lying asleep before creation. There was no physical activity, only mental activity. Absence of activity is 'tantamount to death'. The union and intercourse described as Mithun or having sex in verse no. 4 above is also mental; the desire to eat is similarly also mental. An inert and inactive Prajapati lying as if in death mode which prevails after the creation is concluded was indeed death personified. See note to verse no. 3.

Earlier it has already been said that hunger, or its acronym 'greed and desire', is equivalent to death, signifying the fact that one must not have greed or desire because both of them would lead to death. Hunger made Prajapati so mean that he wished to devour his own offspring, Samvatsar or Kaal. Since a parent produces a child in its own likeness, Prajapati, as death personified, produced Samvatsar which is the fixed period or span of life of a creature, at the end of which is death. This is the opposite of being eternal and imperishable. This verse also indicates that even Prajapati Brahma, the creator of the physical visible world, who was born from the eternal Brahm, would also come to an end when his time is up.

Now, Prajapati and the word Aditi mean a guardian or parent respectively. We see that Prajapati is 'a father' because he produces the sperm or 'Beej' or seed. He is also 'the mother' because he nourishes the cosmic egg (embryo) of Samvatsar in his womb till its maturity and emergence as an infant Kaal as described in verse no. 4.

Aditi also stands for the Duloka or the heavens, and the Antariksha or the sky as established by the following Mantra of the Yajur Veda ‘अदितिर्द्यौरदितिरन्तरिक्षमदिति माता स पिता’ (Yajur Veda, 25/23).

The cosmic egg called Hiranyagarbha was nourished by Prajapati in his womb. This womb was not a physical womb as we understand it to be, but it represented the entire sky or space of the cosmos. In due course of time, the myriad visible parts of the universe that came into being were actually that primordial, primary egg transforming itself into them. Space or heaven has a neuter gender; hence Aditi is neither a male nor a female; it is neither ‘he nor she’; it is best described by the pronoun ‘it’.

The ‘creator’ Prajapati started both the beginning as well as the initial process of creation, and then fixed its life span. That is, Prajapati created, then nourished in his womb, gave birth to, and finally concludes his own creation. This special feature sets Prajapati, alias Aditi as well as Mrityu, apart from the rest—he created, he sustained and he even fixed the destiny or death of his own creation. The ‘eating of its own offspring’ as described in verse nos. 4 and 5, is a metaphor for this process of annihilation of the creation by the creator himself. It is like the case with ‘fire’—the fire sustains life, no life is ever possible without the latent presence of fire in this creation, but it is so relentless, unforgiving, uncompromising, ferocious and cruel, that it destroys everything and anything that comes in its contact. Since a parent enjoys the comforts derived from a family, Prajapati Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who was assigned the task of creation by the supreme Brahm, also enjoys the pleasures and comforts derived from his own creation. This creation gives him pleasure, but at the same time he has no compunctions and regrets nothing in bringing it to a conclusion, or literally ‘eating it up’.

²That is, a wise and erudite man realises that the supreme Brahm has created everything for a specific purpose—material things are meant to be give comfort to the body, and food is meant to be eaten. If they are not used properly and within their life span, they would decay and perish nevertheless because ‘death’ of anything that came into existence is a forgone conclusion. There is another twist to this view—the person should also realise at the same time that his own body would meet the same fate, death, and it would also decay and perish one day if not put to good use. This wisdom and realisation would inculcate renunciation and detachment in him; he would then strive to seek the path that can give him eternal life, and this would lead him on to the path of spiritualism that can bestow eternal bliss and happiness to him. He further realises that he is an image of the supreme Viraat Purush that has the Brahm in his bosom even as the person has the Atma in his own bosom. This profound realisation is the ultimate of Upanishadic teachings.]

6. [Prajapati decided to do a fresh grand sacrificial ritual. His Pran came out of his body and the body began to expand.]

The creator (Prajapati) wished or aspired to do another big religious sacrifice once again. For this purpose, he made great effort and did severe Tapa (austerity, penance and observance of strict vows).

This exercise created ‘Yash’ (the virtues of majesty, grandeur, fame, reputation, glory, splendour, honour and praises) as well as ‘Virya’ (the virtues of strength, vitality, stamina, vigour, potent and

energy). These two virtues are represented by the 'Pran' element in creation¹.

This Pran attempted to escape from the body of the creator, and as a result the body started to expand (it bloated like a balloon)². But the Mana (i.e. the mind that creates a desire and harbours ambitions) still remained inside the body of the creator³ (6).

[Note :- ¹Pran is that vital force which keeps the various sense organs of perceptions of the body such as the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the skin, as well as the organs of action such as the hands, the legs, the mouth, the excretory and the reproductive, active and working in their prime form. These organs are outwardly inclined because they relate to the outside world. They help to establish a person's fame and glory in this world. A person acquires knowledge through the medium of his sense organs of perception, and this knowledge empowers him with wisdom and skills that give him authority and renown, strength and ability. His actions through the organs of action also help to establish his authority and majesty in this world. Since Pran is the vital life-giving factor in his body, it is deemed that Pran, through these organs, gives him Yash and Virya. It therefore represents a person's fame, majesty, energy and vitality. A live person is of some value for the creation, and not a dead person. All the good name and fame that a person acquires, is because of the Pran living in his body.

²As long as the Pran lives in the body, a person accomplishes so many formidable and daunting tasks, gets so many good honours and is revered by the people, but as soon as the Pran leaves the body, the same person becomes good for nothing. Hence, once the Pran attempted to leave the body of Prajapati, it started to swell in order to contain it.

Besides this metaphysical interpretation, there is also another way of looking at this 'swelling of the body' from the view of the physical sciences. According to one of the established theories of creation, there was a 'big bang' in the beginning of creation when the primary elements became so dense that they contracted and contracted until the moment the mass became so dense that its energy exploded. This explosion and the subsequent expansion of the cosmic dust resulting in the formation of the visible creation, and its ultimate collapse into a black hole from where a new creation would evolve, is metaphorically depicted in the swelling of the body of the creator when the Pran, the main life factor of creation, the chief energy of creation, exploded or revealed its potentials of creating and infusing the otherwise inane and lifeless entities with the vital spark of life, and finally merging itself with the supreme Brahm at the time of its emancipation and salvation, only to remerge again during a new phase of creation.

When a person realises that the 'essence' or the 'fire' that is worth worshipping is the 'Atma or soul' of the universe, and it is as glorious as the sun which illuminates all the worlds single handedly, rather it is like the illuminated Atma of the dark universe, the person becomes enlightened, and such a person never fears from the darkness of death. Another interesting point is to use the analogue of the sun as a parallel for the Ashwamedh. The sun is the ball of fire having an approximate life 12 billion years, out of which 4.5 billion years have already passed. It is estimated that during the course of its life, as it consumes its reserve of energy, which we shall call its Pran, it expands or 'swells' just like the body of Prajapati. During the last 4.5 billion years of its existence, it has already expanded and become brighter by about 40% from what it was at

the beginning. It is projected that in approximately 4.5 or 5.5 billions years from now, the hydrogen fuel of the sun's core would be exhausted, and it will start burning the gas in its surrounding atmosphere. The core would shrink, but the outer layers would expand or swell rapidly as the sun transforms itself into a red giant. In the course of this outward ballooning of the sun, it would blow away a substantial share of its mass, becoming less dense and therefore exert less gravitational pull on its planets. Meanwhile, the expanding and swelling red giant will become 256 times bigger than what it is today, and 2730 times as bright and hot, scorching everything, especially life on earth, to cinders. The earth will be vaporized into nothingness of the cosmos or pushed away spirally into the deep recesses of space. [This is based on a research work published in monthly notices of the royal astronomical society by two astronomers, Klaus Peter Schroeder of the University of Guanajuato in Mexico and Robbert Cannon Smith of the University of Sussex in England. They used a new technique developed by Schroeder and Manfred Cuntz at the University of Texas in Arlington.]

³But even as a person's mind remains ever eager to acquire more of anything, it remains attached to anything he loves though that object of his affection has been made available to him in abundance, the mind symbolically remained inside the body when the Pran finally left the body at the time of death. This 'mind remaining inside the body even when the Pran has left it' explains why a person takes another birth, because his greed and yearnings, his hopes and expectations, his ambitions and desires still linger on with the mind symbolically remaining inside in him. This mind never lets him lie in peace.

That is, although the creator had created so many things, he was still not satisfied as the Mana compelled him to wish for more. This is a metaphoric way of saying that as long as the man has not controlled his mind, he would keep on yearning for more and have endless ambitions, thereby robbing him of his peace and tranquility.]

7. [What did that Prajapati—whose Mana or mind was focused on this body—do? This question is answered in this verse.]

He (the creator Prajapati) wished that his body, which had been swollen and become prominent because of the Pran, should be sanctified and become holy enough to be fit for a religious sacrifice. 'Let me have such a body', thought the creator. Therefore, since his body had become swollen, it was called an 'Ashwa', literally a horse, and since it was made holy, pure and sanctified, it was called 'Medhya' or something that can be offered in a religious sacrifice. This is the essence of the sacrifice known as 'Ashwa Medh Yagya', or the sacred horse-sacrifice. A person who knows this fact knows the essential meaning of the sacrifice known as 'Ashwamedh Yagya'.¹

Now, since Prajapati had planned or wished to do a great horse-sacrifice as described here, he imagined or visualised this sacrificial horse (the Ashwamedh) as being set free. The horse was allowed to roam free for one year, called the period of Samvatsar, and after that period it was touched and sacrificed². Similarly, other animals were made available for other Gods to offer their sacrifices in the divine ritual. That is why those who do great horse-sacrifices offer an animal which has been duly sanctified and purified by the use of Mantras, and which is deemed to be equivalent to or a representative of all the Gods, including Prajapati³.

The sun is like the sacrificial horse because it shines with radiance and dazzle just like the radiance and glory that the sanctified horse possesses. The radiance, splendour, brilliance and dazzling illumination that the sun possesses is due to the potentials of the fire element present in it. The Samvatsar (one full year of seasons) is its symbolic body (indicating that the entire year should be regarded as holy and not even a day should be wasted in futile pursuits). The fire is its essence (i.e. its most important ingredient that makes the sun so valuable and honourable). And this world is its Atma/soul (because if the world was not there, there was no use for the sun to shine, and no one would be there to either offer worship to the sun or honour its essence, the fire element). Therefore, these two—the burning sun and the burning fire—are the symbolic Ashwa (horse) and Arka (essence of life)⁴ respectively.

Though Ashwa (sacrificial horse) and Arka (essence) have two symbolic forms—viz. the body of the Viraat or creator Prajapati and the Sun as the former, and basic fire element and the light, energy and heat of the sun as the latter, the supreme entity or ‘Devta’ (God) that personifies for death is one and the same⁵.

A person who is wise enough to understand the esoteric, subtle and sublime meaning of what is ‘death’ is able to vanquish it; he becomes potent enough to overcome the cycle of repeated deaths, i.e. he does not have to take birth again and again; death cannot affect him as he goes beyond the purview of death. Rather, he himself becomes a personification of the God who appeared to be death personified so much so that such a person becomes so exalted and enlightened that his stature becomes equivalent to one of these Gods who had joined Prajapati in doing the divine horse-sacrifice⁶ (7).

[Note—¹Here, the divine cause for which the creator Prajapati had offered himself is ‘creation’, and he has offered himself as the ultimate offering in the guise of the sacrificial horse. Hence, the horse used in such rituals is not an ordinary animal, but it represents the creator himself.

²Since Prajapati and the sacrificial horse are symbolically the same entity, the horse that was offered as sacrifice as part of the sacrificial ritual of the fire-sacrifice was tantamount to Prajapati offering his own self to be sacrificed at the ritual. To offer oneself as an offering at a religious sacrifice is the highest form of offering that a person can offer to the supreme Lord; it is the highest category of offering and sacrifice for any cause. For instance, patriot soldiers offered their lives in order to protect their country from invaders. For them, the battle is a religious sacrifice in which they offered themselves.

³Since the entire creation was created by the creator Prajapati Brahma, when he offered himself as an offering, it is natural that all other subjects of his creation emulated his example and offered themselves for a noble cause. This is a metaphoric way of saying that if the man is righteous and noble, then all his followers and subordinates would also become like him.

⁴Any ‘fire’ sacrifice revolves around the sacred fire signifying the cosmic energy of creation that is honoured, offered worship and invoked for the benefit of the person who performs the rituals. Without the energy, vitality, vigour, stamina, strength and potent represented by the fire element, no success can be accomplished in this world. The sun is a

great repository of the fire element; it is a natural reservoir of the celestial fire.

The horse is the medium through which the horse-sacrifice is done, and the fire is the divine energy that is aspired or hoped to be gained or acquired or accomplished by having successfully completed the sacrifice. Where is the fire permanently located, or which body in creation is evidently a storehouse of the cosmic fire? The obvious answer is the 'Sun' because it is the cauldron that lights up the entire visible universe. Therefore, the sun is the body represented by the sacrificial horse, while the fire is its essence or Arka, its intrinsic quality or virtue for which it is worshipped and honoured. This virtue of the sun that it gives heat and energy to the world and is a receptacle of the fire element makes it equivalent to a sacrificial horse.

Hence the horse is the body of Prajapati the creator, while the Atma in it represents the Pran of that Prajapati. Since the horse is an image of the Viraat or the macrocosmic form of creation, it is also an image of all the different Lokas of which Prajapati is the soul.

Further, it is said that the body of the Sun is Samvatsar. It is true because Samvatsar means a fixed life span, a fixed period of time, and the sun rises at a fixed time and sets at a fixed time. The rising of the sun on a particular day till its setting indicates one full, complete life cycle of a creature, right from its birth till its death.

⁵The supreme transcendental Lord who concludes everything, withdraws the entire creation in himself at the time of this conclusion, and then unfolds it when he so desires, is only one and not two. This 'one' supreme entity is known as Brahm; the rest of the Gods and other aspects of creation are but that Lord's various revelations or forms to carry on with specific functions of creation.

⁶We have seen that the God personified as 'death' is none other than the creator himself. This God is the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all-pervading supreme transcendental Lord of creation who had manifested himself as all the creatures of this creation, forming their individual bodies at the micro level of creation. This fact has been expressly stated in those Upanishads that deal with the genesis of creation, such as Aeiteriyo amongst others. At the time of conclusion of this creation, the entire world reverts back into the primary elements from which it was crafted by the creator in the first place, and when the new creation comes into being, these elements regroup and refold the canvas once again. So this allusion to a wise man who understands the basic meaning of death being equivalent to the God who personifies death basically means that such a man has realised that his true identity is not what his physical body makes him out to be but the fundamental essence that forms his core, and it is the supreme transcendental cosmic Atma or soul which is pure consciousness and a manifestation of the supreme Lord, the Viraat. Again, since this Viraat himself is also a macro level manifestation of the supreme Brahm, a wise man realises that he is that Brahm's manifestation at the micro plane. This Brahm is primarily eternal, imperishable and immutable, and therefore the man also deems himself to possess these grand characteristics. Obviously, any entity that is eternal and imperishable is beyond the purview of death.]

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Chapter 1/Brahmin 3

[Brahmin 1 and 2 had described the symbolic horse sacrifice performed by Prajapati to start creation, and it goes on to show how death finally liberates a wise person if he understands the subtle meaning of the metaphysical concepts pertaining to the horse sacrifice as well as the fire sacrifice.

The following Brahmin describes the ‘Udgith’, the worship of the various Gods by singing or incantation of their respective hymns in order to please them to help conquer death represented by the demons or evil forces of creation. The great Gods of creation, representing good and noble virtues, tried to overcome the non-Gods, their demon brethren representing evil and unrighteous characteristics, by asking the patron Gods of the sense organs of the body to sing Udgith (the sacred hymns sung for the purpose of invoking the blessings of patron Gods for the elevation or enhancements of stature, to provide special mystical powers and bestow supremacy to the aspirant singer) on their behalf (so that they can achieve supremacy over the non-Gods). These individual Gods representing the sense organs were selfish. They wished to enjoy the rewards of singing devotional hymns to honour the supreme God, i.e. the singing of the Udgith, themselves, and hence their efforts to gain supremacy failed because of this negative trait of being selfish.

Finally, the Pran sang the Udgith and its singing helped the Gods overcome the demonic forces of creation. This was because Pran was selfless. This Brahmin endeavours to establish the supremacy of Pran over all other Gods even as Prajapati is superior to all other Gods who preside over this creation.

It should be noted that this episode appears in another major Upanishad called Chandogya with slight variations in its chapter 1, section 2 of the Sam Veda tradition. It is included in this author’s anthology of this Veda’s Upanishads in the present series.]

1. Prajapati had two categories of sons— the Gods (those who were virtuous, righteous, noble and holy) and the Asurs (the non-Gods, the demons and evil ones). Out of them, the Gods were in a minority whereas the Asurs had a larger presence. They lived in different parts of the world, but were jealous of each other, keeping animosity and ill-will, hating each other and often involved in fighting with each other. The Gods decided that they would organise a fire-sacrifice and use ‘Udgith’, an incantation of sacred hymns of the Vedas, especially of the Sam Veda, to invoke divine intercession on their behalf to enable them to overcome the Asurs (who had been constantly tormenting them) (1).

[Note :- (i) The *Gods* represented good virtues and righteous inclinations in creation, while the *Asurs*, the demons, represented just the opposite characteristics. It is common knowledge and observation even in today day-to-day world that good people are few in number and far between as compared to bad and evil-minded persons.

(ii) The word *Udgith* repeatedly appears in Sam Veda’s Chandogya Upanishad. It has three components — ‘Ud’ + ‘Gai’ + ‘Thak’ (उद् + गै + थक्). It means the singing of the glories of the supreme Lord using the hymns of the Sam Veda. These hymns are manifestations of Pranav, the all-pervading cosmic sound represented by the divine, ethereal and

eclectic word OM which is a word equivalent of the supreme Lord known as Brahm. It is a form of melodious singing of the stupendous glories of the supreme transcendental Lord using the verses of the Sam Veda. Therefore, OM—which is the divine cosmic word representing Brahm and Pranav—is also known as Udgith. The symbol ॐ represents the divine word OM which is Udgith (Chandogya Upanishad, 1/1/5). Udgith is regarded as being equivalent to Amrit, which is the elixir of eternity and bliss, of the Gods (UDGITHAM DEVEBHYOAMATAM— उद्गीथं देवेभ्योऽमत्— Jaimini, 1/11/8). Udgith is also likened to Pran because both move upwards, they are upwardly mobile, uplifting and elevating for the soul of the creature (MANA EVA HINKARO, VAK PRASTAV, PRAN UDGITH — मन एवं हिकारो, वाक् प्रस्ताव, प्राण उद्गीथ— Jaimini, 1/33/3). The Sun which moves across the sky is also synonymous with Udgith— high in the sky, splendorous, faultless, life sustaining Pran which illuminates the death-like dark world (ATH KHALU YA UDGITHA SA PRANAVO YAHA PRANAVHA SA UDGITH ITYASAU VAA ADITYA UDGITHA— Chandogya Upanishad, 1/5/1). The juice or nectar of voice or speech is ‘Richa’ (sacred hymns), and the essence of Richa is ‘Sam’, and the extract or refined essence of this Sam is the ‘Udgith’ (VAACHA RIGRASAH RICHHA SAMRASHA SAMRAHA UDGITHO RASAH—Chandogya, 1/1/2). Simply put, it is a melodious rendering of the sacred chants of the Sam Veda hymns done during religious fire sacrifices to invoke the blessing of different Gods.]

2. Thence the Gods requested the faculty of speech, called ‘Vak’, to sing or chant the Udgith for them. Vak accepted their request and chanted the Udgith for them. The ‘Bhog’ of that Udgith singing by Vak (i.e. the external benefits that are the result of the spoken word in the form of talk, discussion, debate, conversation and oration etc.) was made available to the Gods on whose behalf the Vak sang the Udgith¹, while the inherent subtle and sublime pleasure and enjoyment derived from singing sweetly, enchantingly and pleasantly the auspicious hymns was kept by the Vak God for himself.

This loud incantation warned the demons that the Gods have employed an Udgata (one who sings Udgith, the sacred hymns of the Sam Veda) to get empowered with divine blessings, and once empowered they would attack them. Hence, they quietly and surreptitiously went to the Vak God and corrupted him with sin.

[How? This is answered now—] The ‘improper words’ spoken by the God of speech or the Vak God (such as words that are generally considered sinful, bad, unwarranted, inauspicious and unrighteous; words that are unbecoming of a man’s inherent high stature and noble stature) are tantamount to it ‘being corrupted by the demons’ (2).

[Note:-¹There are umpteen benefits of the faculty of speech. For example, we call others by this faculty of speech; we teach, read, recite, talk, instruct others and perform so many tasks in this world with the help of this faculty. In fact, life would be very difficult if there was no power to communicate between any two individuals. These are some of the numerous general benefits that the speech provided to the Gods. But this faculty also had some subtle and sublime virtues that gave immense pleasure to those who used this faculty, such as the pleasure of melodious and sweet singing of the sacred hymns, the pleasure of using sweet words to assuage hurt feelings, the pleasure of helping others in

time of need by giving them good advice, etc. The God of speech should have offered even the pleasure of auspicious singing etc. to the Gods because a true selfless service is one in which the person does not appropriate any benefit of an exercise done on some other person's behalf for his own self, for his own benefit. This God of speech, Vak, therefore became selfish; he spoke or sung the Udgith on behalf of the Gods, but appropriated some of the subtle and sublime benefits for its own self and enjoyed the honours lavished on it for such a sweet and melodious singing. This selfishness to appropriate some benefit of good chanting of the hymns, and the desire to be honoured and lauded for the quality of excellent singing and good speaking was a flaw or a 'hole' in the character of Vak (the patron God of speech) which the demons representing evil and pervert forces of nature found and exploited. So they injected evil serum in it, poisoning or corrupting the primary auspicious and immaculate nature of the faculty of speech, thereby causing its demotion and fall from its high citadel. The speech, then onwards, sang the auspicious hymns, read the holy scriptures, repeated divine Mantras and generally spoke good things on the one hand, and on the other hand it uttered swear words, spoke lies and unrighteous things almost like a coma and a full stop and other punctuation marks used in a paragraph. That is, the Vak God simultaneously used good words as well as bad words in future; it was corrupted.]

3. Next, the Gods approached the Pran (i.e. the breath passing in and out of the nostrils) and asked it to give consent to become an Udgata (one who sings the sacred hymns of the Vedas, specially the Sam Veda, for a patron) for them. This Pran accepted their request and completed the incantation of the Udgith. It gave the benefits of 'breathing and smelling', which are the functions of the vital wind present in the nostrils, to the Gods, but the subtle and sublime pleasure and enjoyment that is got by inhaling sweet, fragrant and enchanting smells were kept by it for its own benefit¹. [That is, like in the previous case involving the God of speech, it did not give the entire benefit of singing the hymns of the Udgith to the Gods on whose behalf the Udgith was being sung, but instead kept a part of it for its own good.] The demons came to know that the Gods intend to encroach upon their jurisdiction by making the Pran as their Udgata to invoke divine powers in order to supersede them. So they quietly and surreptitiously went to it and corrupted it. How? Well, the faculty of smell henceforth smelt even improper and prohibited smells, thereby becoming corrupt and sinful (like its predecessor, the Vak God) (3).

[Note—¹There are numerous benefits of the faculty of smelling and breathing. Some of the obvious ones are seen across the animal kingdom—such as the fact that many creatures find their mate relying upon the smell emanating from the other's body; even humans use this smell for this purpose. We smell fruits to decide if they are ripe or not; we smell vegetables to determine whether they are stale or not; we smell poisonous gases to become aware of their danger and run away from the site. These are but only few examples cited to illustrate the point that the Pran present in the nostrils have great benefits for the creatures of the world. But we derive immense subtle and sublime pleasure and joy in smelling sweet fragrance of a flower, for example. This benefit was kept by the nostrils, i.e. by the patron God of smell present in the nostrils as its faculty of smelling. This partiality displayed by the Pran (breath) was

tantamount to being selfish, and the demons exploited this loophole in the character of it to corrupt it. Consequentially, the Pran that earlier smelt only good things now began to enjoy smelling even things that are not regarded worthy of smelling because they are not religiously sanctioned, such as the smell of meat being cooked because this involved killing of an innocent animal. This tendency of the faculty of smell to enjoy smelling unworthy things was symbolically its corruption.]

4. Then the Gods asked the faculty of sight present in the eye to sing the Udgith for them. Accepting their request, the organ of the eye sang the Udgith. The benefit derived from the ability to see everything around was given to the Gods, while the eyes kept for themselves the inherent comfort, pleasure and delight derived from looking at pleasant and auspicious things¹. The demons realised that now the Gods are using the eyes as their Udgata (i.e. singer of the sacred Udgith) to attack them (or encroach upon their domain). So they went to the eye and corrupted it by symbolically piercing it and injecting it with sin, and thereby corrupting the faculty of sight. Henceforth, whatever improper things (i.e. that which is not worthy of seeing) that the eye would see would be called its sin (4).

[Note—¹The benefits of sight are so obvious that they cannot be overstated. Without sight life would be more difficult than say without speech or smelling. When the patron God of the eye recited the hymns of the Sam Veda on the request of the Gods, many benefits were revealed and they empowered the Gods with as many powers. But besides these external advantages of sight, there were certain subtle and sublime benefits, such as the pleasure of seeing pleasant sights. The patron God of sight appropriated these subtle benefits for its own self, and transferred to the Gods only the external benefits of sight. This was its selfishness. This was the loophole the demons exploited to corrupt it, because ideally all the benefits of doing any religious activity for a patron should be fully transferred to the person on whose behalf the exercise is being undertaken.]

Earlier the eyes would not see anything that was not worthy to be seen, but the demons corrupted it and the eyes began to enjoy seeing even those things that they had loathed earlier. This would be evident when we consider some people who get sadistic pleasure and enjoy seeing others suffering and being tortured. This is their sinful character.]

5. Then the Gods requested the faculty of hearing represented by the organ of the ear to sing the Udgith for them. The ears accepted their request and did Udgaan (the singing of Udgith) on their behalf. The result of such Udgith singing (represented by the ability to hear various sounds emanating from various directions) was given to the Gods, but the ears kept the benefit of hearing auspicious things for themselves; they kept the enjoyment and pleasure of hearing sweet things for themselves; they kept the pleasure of hearing melodious songs for themselves¹. [That is, they did not transfer the benefit of enjoyment and the pleasure of hearing good and auspicious things to the Gods, though the Gods were enabled to hear everything, to hear every sound emanating from all the directions. So the transfer of benefit was not full. It was done in a partisan way, and hence was incomplete.] The demons saw this loophole, so they came to the ears

and corrupted them. The ears were symbolically pierced or wounded by them by a weapon known as sin. The ears henceforth began to hear even unwanted and unrighteous things. Such hearings made them sinful and corrupt (5).

[Note—¹Like in the earlier cases, the faculty of hearing present in the ears produced innumerable advantages for the Gods by invoking the benefits accrued by hearing the sacred hymns of the Vedas. But it kept for itself certain subtle and sublime benefits of such singing, such as the inherent pleasure and delight of hearing a melodious song being sung by others or even by one's own self. It should be noted that the faculties of speech of verse no. 2 and faculty of hearing of this verse no. 5 are closely related to each other. It is only when anyone speaks that he can be heard by someone else; it is only when sound is generated that it can be heard by someone. So when the faculty of hearing kept some benefits of Udgith singing for its own advantage instead of transferring the entire benefit to the Gods on whose behalf they were singing the sacred hymns in the first place, the demons exploited this loophole in their character and corrupted them.

Earlier the ears would hear only auspicious things emanating from the various directions, but after being corrupted by the demons they enjoyed hearing even those things that were not worthy to be heard. For example, the ears became eager to hear about 'news' of war zones involving sufferings, casualties and death. People enjoyed when they learned that their adversaries suffered, and they would regret instead if they learned that they are happy.]

6. Thereafter, the Gods asked the Mana (mind—both thoughtful and emotional) to do the Udgaan for them. Saying alright, the Mana completed the Udgaan on behalf of the Gods. The magnificent abilities displayed by the Mana and the stupendous deeds that can be done by the Mana (as exhibited by its unprecedented, stupendous and magnificent ability to think, imagine and have various emotions) were dedicated to the Gods, while the Mana retained the benefits of good aspirations, determinations and volitions for its own self¹.

The demons got the wind of this that the Gods are using the Mana as an Udgata to empower them with divine powers to attack and trounce the demons and encroach upon their realm or domain. So they attacked the Mana and pierced it (wounded it, covered it, corrupted it) with the powerful weapon represented by temptations and perversions of all kinds, collectively called 'sin'. Hence, when the Mana makes wrong, unrighteous, un-virtuous and pervert determinations, when it has wrong kind of aspirations, and when it desires to do what is considered inauspicious and improper, then all these activities of the Mana are regarded as 'sinful'².

Hence, the Gods (of speech—verse no. 2, of smell—verse no. 3, of sight—verse no. 4, of hearing—verse no. 5, and the Mana—verse no. 6) became sinful, or literally 'got pierced by the powerful weapon of sin'. That is, the demons were successful in corrupting the Gods and penetrating their defensive shield of virtuousness, uprightness, righteousness and auspiciousness by the powerful weapon of sin in the manner described above (6).

[Note--¹For example, the mind determined that it would invoke divine powers to intervene on behalf of the Gods to defeat the demons. This prayer was for the benefits of the Gods who stood for the auspicious and righteous virtues and characteristics in creation, but the fact that holiness and divinity was being invoked, the fact that goodness wished to prevail over bad along with the benefits that accrued from such auspicious aspirations and expectations, were retained by the Mana for its own self in the sense that it felt pleasure and comfort at the thought that it has done a great and right thing, it has helped righteousness and auspiciousness to overcome their opposite characters. This part retention of the benefit for its own self prevented from the entire benefit being passed on to the patron on whose behalf the Mana was supposed to be singing of the Udgith.

²Earlier the Mana did not think of anything that came under the definition of corrupt thoughts. But once the demons were successful in penetrating the defensive shield of the Gods, the mind henceforth became corrupted, pervert and sinful. It lost its pristine innocence, its purity and its immaculate nature.]

7. Then the Gods asked the Pran (vital wind that control speech, taste and ability to imbibe food and drink) that lived in the mouth to sing the Udgith on their behalf. The Pran living in the mouth accepted their request and sang the Udgith for them. When the demons found that the Gods have engaged an Udgata to attack them (by invoking the stupendous powers inherent in the Mantras used to sing the sacred hymns of the Udgith), they went to that Pran and tried to corrupt it with sin too so that it loses its potentials and high stature. But even as a clod of mud is reduced to dust when it strikes against a solid rock, these demonic forces dashed against the Pran living in the mouth in their attempt to corrupt it, but failed, and consequentially were scattered around and dispersed in disarray (i.e. they were defeated).

In this way, the Gods finally won and the non-Gods, represented by the demons, were defeated. Anyone who knows this fact is able to defeat his enemy and become victorious (7).

[Note--As has been noted in the introduction to this Brahmin, *Gods* symbolise virtuousness, righteousness, auspiciousness and goodness, while the demons stand for just the opposite. Verse no.1 states that the Gods, or the good virtues which they stand for, were in a minority in the beginning, whereas the demons, or evil tendencies, were the dominant factor. As long as the Gods could be enticed or allow themselves to be affected by sins they could not win the demons, inspite of their doing a religious ritual such as the fire sacrifice as well as the singing of the Udgith. As soon as their selfishness ended, they couldn't be affected by sins, and then they could easily overcome their enemies, the demons. As a matter of fact, they did not even have to fight for supremacy; the demons themselves got reduced to dust when they sought to attack them—this is very clear in this verse no. 7.

The 'Pran in the mouth' represents that virtue or power of the body to accept food and use it judiciously to sustain and nourish all the organs of the body uniformly, without any selfishness or partisan attitude. Compared to other organs which had kept some of the benefit of the singing of the sacred hymns, the Pran in the mouth transferred all the benefit to the organs and their patron Gods, without keeping anything for

its self. This is very obvious as all that is eaten or drunk by the mouth is passed onto the body, with the mouth retaining nothing in it for its own self.

It is pertinent to note here that ‘Gods’ represent the various faculties of the body. At the time of creation, all natural powers and forces of creation were manifested in the form of different Gods, and when the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic form of the supreme transcendental Lord known as Brahm, revealed himself as the creature, these Gods took up residence in the body of the creature in the same location from where they had originated in the body of the Viraat at the beginning. So in a way we can say that individual creature is a microcosm of the vast Nature at the macro level.]

8. The Gods discussed amongst themselves, ‘Who is he and where is he who has given protection, self respect and dignity to us; who has made us honourable and venerable as Gods?’

Someone replied, ‘He is in the mouth. The word for mouth is ‘Aasya’. So the chief Pran or vital wind located in the mouth came to be known as ‘Ayaasya’. He is also called ‘Angiras’ because he is the essence of all the organs of the body. None of the organs can survive if the Pran in the mouth did not eat and drink. This Pran is selfless also because it transferred all that it eats and drinks for the benefit of the body and its organs. Without it, all the organs would decay and die. It is the virtual sustainer and caretaker of the different Gods¹(8).

[Note—¹Since the various organs of the body and their functions are symbolised by the different Gods who represent one or the other magnificent powers of creation as well as of Nature, this Pran is virtually like the quintessential supreme Brahm for them. The Pran living in the mouth is superior to all the other patron Gods of all the other organs, because it was able to defeat the demons due to its selflessness as depicted by its tendency to sustain all the organs impartially and without appropriating any of the benefits of a religious activity for its own self. Therefore, the full name of the most senior amongst the Gods who presides over the functions of the body representing the creation in a miniature form is ‘Ayaasya Angiras’, i.e. the Pran which lives in the mouth, and which is like the essential factor that sustains and takes care of the well being and welfare of the world, is the chief God in creation.

What makes this Pran so special? It is its selfless character. Therefore, this trait of ‘selflessness’ is regarded as the best virtue in creation.]

9. This God called the chief Pran or Ayaasya Angiras has another name ‘Dur’. This word means ‘far, to keep away’. This is because death keeps far away from him. A person who knows this, i.e. the secret that death remains far away from this Pran¹, remains free from death; he is protected from death (9).

[Note—¹What is the secret? The fact that this Pran was ‘selfless’ is the secret. In other words, a person who is selfless in his service to the society and the creation becomes immortal. This is self evident because even long after his physical death, people remember him fondly and with reverence. On the other hand, a selfish man is hated while he is alive and no one wishes to honour him after his death.]

10. That exalted and superior God in the form of Pran freed the other Gods (representing the various sense organs) from the clutches of death symbolised by the sins that had gripped them in its vice-like grip. This sin had corrupted their purity and integrity (as described in verse nos. 2-6). Then the Pran God contemptuously flung those sins symbolising the virtual death of a creature to far off places called the 'borders of the various directions' and exiled them to stay there.

Hence, anyone who does not wish to get trapped by the snare cast by death in the guise of various sins, misdeeds and perversions should avoid going to the boarders¹ where these sins etc. had been exiled, and crossing this forbidden territory (10).

[Note--The superior and wise Pran found that the other organs of perception had become corrupted; their integrity and purity had been compromised. So, after the evil, pervert and sinful tendency represented by the demons were killed or overcome by the Gods as described in verse no. 7, the Pran God symbolically pushed the evil mongering pervert forces far away from the creature's inherent nature of being pure and holy.

¹The word 'boarder' refers to the limits of ethical, moral and righteous behaviour that a person should never violate, because beyond this frontier is the realm of death symbolised by sinful and pervert tendencies and demeanors. Therefore a person who does not violate set norms of civilized, ethical, moral and righteous behaviour, who does not behave or think or sees or hears or talks improperly or un-righteously, virtually gets an eternal life in the shape of renown and good fame, majesty and grandeur, because the gross body might die one day but a person's good name and fame, his renowned righteous and virtuous demeanors, thoughts, deeds and actions remain etched in history for eternity. This is a symbolic way of saying that the person has been made eternal and he has literally conquered death!]

11. That exalted God known as Pran destroyed 'death' representing the natural propensity of the various sense organs to commit acts that are regarded as unrighteous, inauspicious, sinful, corrupted, tainted and pervert. This freed the patron Gods representing these sense organs from the symbolic clutches of death as well as its perpetual awesome fear¹ (11).

[Note--¹By forsaking sin, evil and all sorts of perversions, a man gets the ambrosia of eternity in the form of emancipation and salvation. This eternity might take a more tangible form in this world in the shape of his good name and fame, the honours and reverence that he gets while alive and that last even after his physical death. These make him immortal in the realms of history.]

12. The Pran God, to begin with, took the God of speech across death (i.e. made this particular God fearless from death by making it free from sins and other forms of corruptions). As soon as the God of speech crushed and vanquished death (i.e. was free from the corruptions that taint the faculty of speech), he became as potent and glorious as the 'fire' (i.e. he became as pure, splendorous, glorious, powerful, majestic and potent like a fiercely burning fire). The voice, taking the form of fire, has conquered death, and it glows majestically, radiantly, splendorously, dazzlingly, brilliantly. (12)

[Note--*Speech* which is free from all kinds of taints and corrupting influences—such as the use of curse words, abuse, gossip, futile chattering, criticism of others, telling lies, using false and untruthful words, giving false testimony and witness etc.—is deemed to be pure, potent, powerful and strong like the ‘fire’. The ‘spoken word’ has all the inherent potentials and powerful qualities of fire—for example it gives ‘light’ in the form of knowledge disseminated through preaching or teaching by a wise preceptor or teacher; it can ‘purify’ a soul by showing it the way to atone for its sins when the person hears the teachings of the various scriptures, it can ‘inspire’ one to act judiciously, auspiciously and righteously; it can ‘reform’ even the hardened criminal by good counselling; it can ‘burn’ their evil nature and make them pure etc. On the other hand, it can cause animosity and ill will, and even devastating wars. It can even end wars, because negotiations are done by employing the faculty of speech. The scriptures or any other body of knowledge is best understood when it is taught wisely by a learned teacher, and the same text can be misrepresented and misinterpreted to convey the wrong message to the student if taught unwisely. Any text can be better understood by a person when he discusses its finer nuances with a wise teacher as opposed to the situation when someone tries to understand the text merely by reading it silently to himself without discussions.]

Further, the ‘in competency’ factor of a teacher who uses this faculty of speech to disseminate information and knowledge can be likened to death or corrupted speech because it will not only kill the spirit of the text and the knowledge that it contains but also lead to the student’s intellectual and moral demise because he is taught the wrong knowledge. On the other hand, ‘competency’ of the faculty of speech is like a fiercely burning light of fire because it will enlighten and illuminate not only the individual student or seeker of knowledge but also the rest of the generations to come.]

13. Next, the patron God of smell was taken across death by the Pran God. Being freed from the fear of death (i.e. grip of sins), the power of smell transformed into the Wind God. It is that wind, freed from the clutches of death, which flows everywhere now (13).

[Note—Smell is possible when we inhale air through our nose, and this air brings in the impulses in the form of chemicals that the brain interprets as various smells. This is a localized function, because a particular area might have a foul smell while another area might be completely free from it. Being limited is tantamount to death and being without any boundaries is like becoming eternal. The wind or air in the vast sky is limitless like the sky itself, and hence when the Pran God released the patron God of nose, i.e. the air element into its primary form as the wind or air element, it regained its primacy and became endless, featureless and odourless.]

14. After that, the Pran God took the eyes across death. The patron God of sight, once it was freed from the taint cast by death (i.e. the tendency of the eye to see wrong things or those things which are not worthy to be seen), transformed into Aditya (the brilliant, dazzling and splendorous Sun). That faculty of sight (or the patron God of eyes) shines like a brilliant and splendorous Aditya (i.e. as the Sun in the sky) (14).

[Note—When the eyes regained their divine nature by being freed from their natural propensity to enjoy seeing bad and unworthy sights (such as

pornography, or scenes of mayhem and blood during wars and riots, or enjoying so many other worldly sights that are best avoided), they gained an exalted stature as the principal God that shows light to the world. This was symbolised by the Sun in the sky which lights up the whole world by its light. This inherent virtuous quality of the eye to show the light of righteousness, virtuousness and auspiciousness to the other organs of the body and remove darkness of ignorance for them was metaphorically depicted by saying that the Sun God took up its residence in the eye at the time of creation.]

15. Thereafter, the Pran God took the ears beyond the reach of death (i.e. freed the ears from being tainted by hearing bad things). Having being freed from the grasp of death, the ears represented by the patron God of hearing, transformed themselves into 'Disha'—the various directions of the cosmos. In this way (acquiring the subtle, imperceptible, invisible, intangible form), the ears (and their patron God) became freed from the fear of death (i.e. they became eternal) (15).

[Note--Obviously, the term 'direction or *Disha*', such as North or East or North East, has no end or limitation; they do not have any geographical boundaries. The pointer of the compass would always point towards the North no matter where the compass is held, because 'North' is a hypothetical conception just intended to give a sense of direction in the otherwise directionless neutral void of the celestial space. This North or South is merely a man-made conception; even when the world dies and ends en-masse, these directions would still be there. If someone decides to find where this hypothetical direction known as the 'North' ends, he might go on and on for eternity but not find the point where this North ends! That is, it is 'endless' and therefore 'eternal'.]

16. Lastly, the Pran God delivered the Mana (the mind as well as the heart) from the fear of death. Liberated from the grasp or clutches of death (represented by perversion of thoughts, corrupted wisdom and intellect, unrighteous and unholy outlooks and emotions), the Mana metamorphosed into the Moon God. Liberated and delivered from sin, which is like the vice-like clasp of death, it is the Mana which is shining brightly and magnificently like the moon in the sky. [That is why the moon is considered the patron God for the Mana or the heart and the mind, and a pitcher of 'Amrit', the elixir of the Gods.] A wise and erudite person who knows this essential fact is freed from the fears of death by his Pran God (16).

[Note--Verse nos. 12-16 basically say that to be free from sins, vices, perversions and all kinds of unrighteousness is equivalent to being freed from the clutches of death. 'Death' is not just about physical death of the body; it is only a metaphor for moral degradation and downfall, leading to turpitude and decadence. Even great sages' bodies die; death of the physical body is a natural phenomenon, but those sages themselves become immortal because their goodness lives after their physical death.]

17. Finally the Pran praised and sang the glories of 'Anna' (the patron God of food) for its own self (i.e. it invoked that God who presides over the nourishing and life sustaining properties inherent in food, and sought his blessings). This is because all the food that is accepted (or eaten) by a man, or any living being for that matter, is done by the means of the Pran

present in the mouth (i.e. the man eats and drinks through his mouth and not through any other organ). It is the inherent life-giving energy, strength and powers present in the food as its nutritional quality that sustain and establish Pran (i.e. the vital spark of life) in a man. It's a symbiotic relationship (17).

[Note--When the other patron Gods, such as those of speech, smell, sight, hearing and Mana sang the Udgith and tried to keep some of the benefit of such devotional singing of sacred hymns for themselves, they were deemed to be selfish and got tainted with the sin of selfishness, then why was Pran not tainted while invoking the divine powers of food for its own sake?

The reason for it is that the food eaten by the way of the mouth, where this Pran has its dwelling, sustains the whole body, including those Gods who patronize the different organs of perceptions and actions as described earlier. So Pran was not being selfish. On the other hand, it was being charitable and magnanimous because all the other Gods were not able to take food directly and sustain themselves; they depended upon the Pran present in the mouth to enable them to take in food and then extract the nutrition contained therein for their own use.

Then how was, say, 'eye' being selfish? Because it enjoyed the sight of pleasant and beautiful things, but this enjoyment and the pleasure derived from a beautiful sight could not be shared by the ears or the nose or the mouth, as neither the ear nor the nose or the mouth could 'see'. The faculty of seeing is the exclusive domain of the organ of the eye. That is why, when the eye retained the pleasure of seeing beautiful things for its self, it was deemed to be selfish, as compared to the Pran in the mouth which also invoked the blessings of the patron God of food for its self, but it was for the purpose to benefit all other organs and their patron Gods; this benefit was to be 'shared' by the other Gods also. So Pran was *not* being selfish. See the next verse no. 18.]

18. The other Gods said to Pran that they have invoked and sought the blessings of the patron God of food by singing his glories all for himself, but to be truthfully selfless the Pran should share some part of the food with them after he has derived his own share from it. The Pran replied to them that they should enter him or merge themselves with him from all the sides in order to share and benefit equally from the food eaten by the Pran. [That is, Pran was so generous and benevolent that he was ready to share the benefits of the food without any distinction between himself and any one of the other Gods.]

'Let it be so', saying this all the patron Gods of the sense organs entered or merged or coalesced themselves with the Pran. That is the reason why the food eaten by the Pran 'through the mouth' satisfies the patron Gods of all the organs (i.e. the entire body benefits from it).

A person who knows this is sought after by those who are 'Gyani' or are learned, wise, scholarly and erudite¹ (because he will take care of all of them, he will ensure that all are equally fed and taken good care of). Such a person is a good caretaker, sustainer, nourisher and protector of all his kith and kin; he is regarded as the best amongst them, and the most exalted even amongst wise erudite, sagacious and learned persons, called Gyanis, who might be selfish inspite of their knowledge and erudition. Those who oppose such a man are unable to look after their dependants,

whilst those who follow his example become competent and able to look after theirs (18).

[Note :- (i) ¹The important point in the last few stanzas is the word *Gyani*—meaning those who are learned, intelligent, scholarly, wise, sagacious, erudite and enlightened persons. Such persons are distinguished among those who are merely aware of the fact that Pran sustains all the Gods. In other words, even if a man is not a scholar in scriptures, a Pundit so to say, but realises that the food, and for that matter anything which is necessary for life, e.g. clothes, shelter, water, wealth and other worldly assets and resources available to mankind, should be shared equally with all the brethren and not selfishly hoarded for only himself, then such a person will share everything that he has with the rest of the society, and is therefore regarded highly and reverentially by it. He will be like the ‘Pran God’ mentioned herein above, and the rest of the society, even the noble men amongst them, will be like the different patron Gods who seek the shelter, refuge and blessings of such a noble man just like the different Gods sought the refuge of the Pran God as described in this particular verse.

(ii) The Pran ensured that all the patron Gods got equal nutrition and worked in harmony with each other, instead of being selfish and jealous of each other, and fighting for their own rights and vying with each other for their survival. This verse shows that a magnanimous and benevolent king or leader is he who sustains the rest of his subjects equally, uniformly, and without any prejudice and distinction much like the Pran God which sustains all the other Gods who depend upon him with equanimity.]

19. The elementary factor that sustains life in a creature is known as ‘Pran’. It is the basic element, the fundamental factor that sustains life in this creation. It is also known as ‘Ayaasya’ as well as ‘Aangiras’. This is because the Pran has its abode or residence in the mouth and is the essential and vital life-sustaining element in creation. It is like the nectar that sustains life of all the organs and their patron Gods. It is like the essence of life and the soul of the all the organs of the body, and any organ from which this Pran makes its exit dies as a consequence. In other words, no organ can survive without Pran being present within it; it would wither away and die (19).

[Note—The individual organs of the body do not have the ability to take in food and then extract the much-needed nutrients from it for their sustenance. It is the Pran present in the mouth as the vital wind/air element known as the Apan wind that enables the food to enter the body. Once in, the food is digested and the nutrients equally distributed through the body because of the life-sustaining other vital winds/air elements present inside the body such as the Samaan, Vyan and Udaan etc. All these winds are collectively called Pran, which term is a metaphor for life and vitality.]

20. Pran is also known as ‘Vrihaspati’ because speech is ‘Brihati’ and its patron Lord is Vrihaspati (20).

[Note--The word *Brihat* means large, vast, strong, powerful, high, exalted, senior, forcible and important. Since the faculty of speech has these virtues, it is known as ‘Brihati’. The hymns of the scriptures can be incanted by the employment of voice and the faculty of speech, and these

hymns are of great power and possess majestic divine potentials, lending the term Brihati to the instrument that enables them to be incanted. Amongst the various functions of the organs in the body of a man, the voice is the one that establishes his repute and importance, as is evident from the fact that good speakers are world renowned and most sought after. A person's knowledge and erudition is of use to others only when he teaches or tells others about it, and the faculty of speech and the use of voice are vital instruments to do so. The voice has a much greater reach and import as far as the outside world is concerned than any other single faculty as is evident when a man can call out loud and make his presence felt even from a great distance. It is very evident in modern times when voice is the first means to make contact and the first factor that identifies a person when we talk long-distance over the telephone. The news of any far away event is made known to us when we hear someone speaking about it, say over the radio. Thus the voice and speech have a wide and broad reach, making them 'Brihat'.

Jupiter is the largest planet in the solar system. So metaphorically, Jupiter is to the Gods what speech is to the other functions of the various sense organs of the body. *Vrihaspati*, represented by the planet Jupiter, is said to be the moral preceptor of the Gods. Since Pran is the senior most amongst the different Gods that are present in the body of a living creature, it is metaphorically called by this name to recognise its exalted, reverend, honourable and senior position in the hierarchy of Gods even as *Vrihaspati* is regarded as the most revered amongst the Gods in heaven.]

21. The Pran is 'Brahmnaspati or the Lord of Brahma'. Speech is Brahma (i.e. the revealed form of Brahm), and Pran is the Lord of speech (because only Pran in the form of the vital wind passing through the vocal cords can enable a man to speak, for a dead man from whose body the vital winds have left does not speak). Therefore, Pran is the Lord of Brahma; Pran is Brahm (because Brahm is the Supreme Being who is the ultimate authority and Lord of all that exists, including Brahma the creator who has created the Vedas as a revelation of the stupendous powers of Brahm to 'speak') (21).

[Note :- Verse no. 20 tells us that Pran, which is the vital force that sustains life in the body, is the senior most God called *Vrihaspati*, and verse no. 21 goes a step ahead to stress that Pran, which energizes the voice and the faculty of speech to enable a man to speak and use his voice, is even superior to Brahma, the patriarch of creation represented by speech and voice. This is because the supreme Brahm had created Brahma to reveal the Vedas, which are a manifestation of all the primary knowledge of creation, and speech or voice are the medium used to reveal these Vedas for the benefit of the creatures. In other words, the faculty of speech and the voice are equivalent to Brahma because the primary function of both was to reveal the Vedas.

The 'sound' is a basic sign and 'speech' is a basic function of life in creation, as even today astronomers and astrophysicists try to catch any trace of sound emanating from the unknown depths of the distant cosmos to determine the existence of any form of heavenly bodies and celestial life there.

Further, in verse no. 21-25 below the importance of Pran is highlighted. It is stated that Pran is synonymous with Sam which is the hymn of the Sam Veda and regarded as the best form of incantation, it is

like the Udgith which is the singing that is spiritually uplifting for the soul of a man, it is like the essence of life of all the other organs of the body, and it is the one that enables a man to become prosperous and acquire renown. Anything that is 'best' is equivalent to Brahm. Therefore also speech and voice are equivalent to Brahm and its manifestation Brahma, the creator of the faculty of speech, its patron Goddess Saraswati, and its use as an instrument of revealing the Vedas. That is also why the Vedas were originally orally transmitted in the form of the spoken word because Pran was the instrument that enabled the Vedas to be chanted. These Vedas are synonymous with knowledge, and enlightenment and wisdom are the hallmarks of Brahm. This also establishes that speech and voice are Brahm personified.

Obviously, Brahma the creator, and everything else for that matter, have their relevance only as long as a man is alive, only as long as there is 'Pran' or life in his body, for a dead person does not bother about Brahma or Vrihaspati or anything else. In other words, Brahm, who is synonymous with the essence of life and therefore with Pran, is superior to Brahma and the rest of the creation; nothing matters and nothing is relevant without Brahm.

Why is 'speech or voice' likened to Brahm? This is because in Vedanta philosophy, when Brahm decided to initiate creation, he first produced the cosmic Naad, the primary sound element represented by the ethereal and divine word OM which was the first manifestation of Brahm. Since speech or voice is a form of sound, the faculty of speech is a revelation of the supreme Brahm, while the sound emanating from the vocal cords when a creature speaks is an equivalent of the cosmic Naad and the words spoken are equivalent to the word OM.

According to the Purans, which are the famed mythological histories of the Hindus, when the visible creation came into being, the creator Brahma spoke the primary words Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha and Janaha from which the first worlds came into being. These worlds were the earth, the sky, the celestial heaven and the world inhabited by living creatures respectively. It must be noted here that the visible world and the first signs of life had their genesis in 'words' which primarily consist of sound waves having different tones and nodes. Since voice is a manifestation of sound, it follows that it is also synonymous with the primary signs of life, and by extension of the supreme transcendental Brahm which is at the core of life.]

22. Pran is 'Sam'. Vak (i.e. the spoken word and the faculty of speech) is the letter 'Sa', and Pran (i.e. the vital spark of life in the form of vital wind) is the letter 'M'. The union of the two letters, Sa and M, makes the word 'Sam' and this fact establishes and asserts the fundamental importance and significance of Sam's glory, potentials, majesty and magnificence¹.

This Pran is treated as being 'equivalent to Sam' because it is like a fly, like a mosquito, like an elephant and like the three worlds taken together².

A person who knows these grand facts about Sam attains intimate closeness with this Sam (i.e. he realises that his Pran/vital life and his Atma/soul are synonymous entities, and therefore he merges his Atma with the Pran to become one with it). That is, a self-realised man obtains the state of existence called 'Sayujya' in which the person finds an

intimacy with his patron deity which is Pran representing the supreme Brahm in this case, and therefore such a man is also fortunate to live in the proximity of the deity in its own abode in a state of exalted existence known as ‘Salokya’³ (22).

[Note--¹To say the letter ‘Sa’, one has to open the mouth wide, symbolising the power of the Pran to speak, whereas the letter ‘M’ shuts the mouth, and the humming resonating sound produced by prolonging this letter signifies the presence of the vital life sustaining Pran in the body. The ‘opening’ of the mouth is a metaphor for the springing forth of life, while the ‘closing’ of the mouth is equivalent to death. Thus, the word *Sam* symbolically covers the entire gamut of creation—right from its conception to its final conclusion.

Further, the sound produced by the second letter of Sam is identical to the one produced by the second letter of the divine, ethereal, cosmic word-Mantra OM, which is also ‘M’, and the opening of the mouth when the first letter Sa is pronounced is also similar to the opening of the mouth when the first letter ‘O’ of OM is said.

There is another interpretation of the significance of the letters ‘Sa’ and ‘M’ of the word Sam. The letter Sa has a feminine gender indicating all those things that are feminine in nature, while the letter M is of a male gender. The union of these two creates the entire creation. Therefore, Sam symbolically includes the whole creation within its fold.

²By comparing Pran with a minute mosquito or a huge elephant, the Upanishad says that the same Pran or life giving forces reside in all the creatures, from the minutest to the most colossus. It pervades the whole universe uniformly, as is indicated by its presence in all the three worlds—the subterranean, the terrestrial and the celestial world.

³Since Pran is uniformly present everywhere and infuses life into the entire creation, which is otherwise lifeless and inane, so much so that without it no creature can ever hope to survive, it is equivalent and synonymous with the supreme Brahm who lives in the entire creation as its Atma. Therefore, this Atma and Pran are the two faces of the same Brahm. A person’s true identity is the pure conscious Atma residing in his body. Once the person realises that this Atma and Pran are both manifestations of the same transcendental supreme Brahm, that this Atma of his is the same as the Atma of all other creatures of this creation, that Brahm is the supreme life-giving entity that injects Pran or the vital spark of life in all the creatures of creation including himself, and that it uniformly pervades in this entire creation—when this profound realisation dawns upon him, he regards himself as no different from any other creature in the creation. This fills him with greatest of humbleness and humility. He virtually dissolves his individuality and merges his own individual soul with the supreme Soul of the creation. That is, he begins to worship Brahm in the entire creation. With this all-inclusive and holistic view, he literally lives in close proximity with his Lord at all times.

One important point to note here is that the word *Sam* here refers to the sacred hymns of the Sam Veda which are sung melodiously during religious sacrifices to invoke the profound blessings and majestic powers and potentials of Brahm. Since voice and the faculty of the speech are needed to sing, the vital life infusing wind/air that enables a man to sing and speak, known as the Pran, is equivalent to Sam. The process of singing creates a synergy between the qualities of scholarship and expertise in the sacred hymns of the Vedas along with the art and skill of

singing as well as the sentiments and emotions of the singer and establishes them on a single plane. It is well known that singing directly from the heart influences the quality of singing, whereas pure dry knowledge of the scriptures does not. The Atma or soul has been depicted by the Upanishads dealing with Yoga as having its abode in the lotus-like heart of a creature, while Brahm is said to symbolically reside in the intellectual realm of the head because Brahm had entered the body through the Brahm Randhra Chakra located at the top of the head at the time of creation. It is the vital life or Pran that gives the entire singing process its vitality, magnificence, grace and majesty; it is the Pran that makes singing of the Sam possible at all in the first place, for a dead body simply cannot sing.]

23. This Pran is also known as ‘Udgith or Udgeeth’ (the singing of the sacred hymns of the Sam Veda; see also note to verse no. 1 of this Brahmin). Since Pran bears or carries everything (or everything lives, rises up or gets up, moves about and generally shows signs of life because it has got Pran in it, otherwise it would lie like a log of dead wood), it is called ‘Ut’ (उत्), which literally means ‘to stand up; to get up’, because everything gets up or stands up when there is Pran or life in it. [For example, the body of a man gets up when he is alive, or has Pran in it, but when the man dies, or when the Pran has left the body, the same body cannot rise up.]

Similarly, Vak or speech is ‘Geeth’ (गीत्), literally meaning ‘a song’, because voice is needed to sing. Earlier, it has been said that Pran is also known as ‘Vak Devta’ or the patron God of the faculty of speech and the patron God of voice (see verse nos.10, 12) as well as Vrihaspati or the senior most God (verse no.20) and the Lord of voice (verse no. 21). It has all the grand virtues possessed by the supreme authority of creation, known as Brahm, because it can be as miniscule as a mosquito and as colossus as the cosmos; it resides in all the living beings irrespective of their stature and evolutionary position in the hierarchy of creation (verse no. 22). Therefore, Pran is both the ‘Ut’ as well as ‘Geeth’. That is, it is the complete ‘Udgith’ (Ut+Geeth = Udgith or Udgeeth); it has all the characteristic qualities that come within the ambit of Udgith (23).

[Note :- This verse shows that the vital life-sustaining Pran has a complete sway over the ability of the man to get up or rise up from his low stature in the hierarchy of existence when he is born as a humble creature. By properly understanding the importance of speech, he can rise up to a high pedestal of eternity and fame by properly and judiciously cultivating this faculty along with his erudition, wisdom and enlightenment which are revealed in the form of his speech, or in the form of the wise words that he speaks. Even long after the body is dead and gone, a person’s wise words that he had spoken when he was alive are remembered for ever. This ‘remembering for ever’ is a metaphor for the eternal aspect of Pran, while the rising of the man from his stupid and lowly character to that of being a learned, wise, scholarly and erudite person who gives noble advice to the society is equivalent to the *Ut* aspect of Udgith. We usually ‘sing’ the praises of great and noble souls, or we laud them and revere them for their greatness and virtues. This is the *Geeth* aspect of Udgith.]

Further, the singing of the sacred hymns of Sam, called ‘Udgith or Udgeeth’, is a metaphor for erudition and scholarship, because in earlier times only those people who were educated, learned and scholarly could sing the complicated verses of the Vedas; not everyone could melodiously chant the verses of the Vedas because the latter were not accessible to all and sundry. So the word *Udgith* combines both the aspects of Pran— one, to rise up from a low stature to a high stature, and second, to be scholarly, learned and wise.]

24. There is a famous episode regarding the singing of the Udgith (the sacred hymns of the Sam Veda) being successful only if the Pran and the speech are jointly involved in its rendering.

Once, a chief priest named Brahmdutta, who was the son of Chaikitan, said while drinking Som (which is an invigorating and rejuvenating drink drunk before the commencement of singing of the Sam Veda during religious sacrifices), ‘If I had ever sung the sacred hymns of the Sam Veda, called Udgith, with an erroneous understanding that the vital life-giving Pran called the spirit or Atma of a living creature, and the vital wind called the Pran that empowers and enables the faculty of speech to sing, are two separate entities and have distinct existence (i.e. if I have the misconception that the vital life-infusing factor and consciousness that pervades uniformly throughout the body, and the vital wind that passes up through the throat and produces sound that enables me to sing, are not one and the same entity though they have different names according to the functions they perform), then let the patron God of Som, known as ‘Som Deva’, sever my head and let it fall down in shame (i.e. let me be severely punished for uttering falsehoods and for my lack of erudition and ignorance).

This—the fact that his head did not fall down—shows that he (a) had always sung the Udgith sincerely and dedicatedly, without any deceit and falsehoods, synchronizing his Pran represented by his vital winds that activated his faculty of speech, as well as his Pran representing his consciousness and spirit or Atma in a harmonious way, and (b) what he sang came straight out from his heart where the Atma resides¹, rendering the singing of the hymns very effective and infused with the glory of words spoken with honesty and sincerity (24)

[Note--¹Brahmdutta had put in his soul into what he was chanting or singing. While singing, he concentrated on it, without allowing his mind from wandering anywhere else. It was not a superficial incantation of the verses just to show off his literary scholarship and his singing prowess, such as his skills at using the voice melodiously, while his mind was wandering somewhere else, with his eyes randomly flicking away from one object to another, with his ears engaged in hearing so many noises that were coming in from the outside world, with his nose enjoying the pleasant fragrances and sweet smells emanating from fragrant flowers heaped on the occasion or from the incense sticks that were lit, and with his skin getting distracted by various sensations such as the enjoyment of the comfort of a soft mat, or the pleasure of the blowing of a cool breeze, or even the itch caused by a mosquito bite! In short, that gentleman who was singing the Udgith was fully concentrated on his singing and was oblivious to his surroundings; he was not at all distracted by so many stimuli that impinged on his sense organs, thereby causing distraction for

his sub-conscious while he was singing the hymns of the Sam Veda. That is why his head did not fall in shame for violating any religious codes for such singing or committing any errors while singing the sacred hymns, for he was singing with his 'soul or Pran' in it.

An important spin-off of this verse is that one should say what he sincerely thinks and feels like saying; or one should be honest and trustworthy in his thoughts and words. One should not have something in the heart and another in the mouth! Since the pure and supreme consciousness, called the Atma or soul in a creature, is the principal entity that infuses life in it, and the vital wind called the Pran, which enables the creature to speak or sing the sacred hymns, are synonymous with each other, there is no question of any dichotomy or discord between the two. This is also why Brahmduitta's head did not fall because he was speaking the truth; he was not saying something in which he did not believe. He wasn't an imposter.]

25. A person who is well acquainted with the basic 'Swars' (स्वर) involved in the singing of the Sam (the hymns of the Sam Veda; see also verse no. 22)—'Swars' which are the fundamental, primary notes and tones of sound emanating from the throat while one melodiously sings, and which are like the elementary juice or essence or life of the singing of the Sam—is surely bestowed with ample fame, glory, renown, prosperity and wealth. [Melodious singing involves complete commitment on the part of the singer to make the singing beautiful, ethereal, exhilarating and eclectic, to make it captivating and enchanting for the heart as well as the soul. All those who hear good singing are held spellbound by its beauty, magnificence and charm, the spontaneous ecstasy and exhilaration that it produces.]

'Swar' is literally the asset of the Sam; it is the quintessential factor which makes the Sam worth singing and hearing. Swar is the primary factor that renders any song enjoyable and enchanting; Swar infuses life, beauty and charm to any form of singing, including Sam. [Obviously, no one would like to hear a song that is out of tune and has no melody. Tone, tune, mode and notes of music are of paramount importance in singing of any song, let alone the hymns of the Sam Veda which need special dedication.]

Hence, those persons who perform the duty of presiding over religious rituals and incant sacred hymns of the Vedas should incorporate the elements of 'sweetness, succulence, vibrancy, beauty, melody and life' into their singing, incantation or chanting so that the singing becomes captivating and enthralling for the mind and spirit (instead of merely doing the singing mechanically without their heart or soul present in that singing). The religious rituals should be done with a clear and articulate voice. Everyone wishes to see, meet and honour those who sing the sacred hymns beautifully and enchantingly. A person who knows what constitutes the real assets of a singer (which is a melodious rendering of the hymns of the sacred Vedas with a sweet voice, properly tuned and having proper tones and nodes of music) as well as the importance of Swar while singing the hymns of the Sam, is sure to attain relevant glory, fame and majesty because he will endeavour to sing better and whole heartedly, thereby establishing his fame as an expert singer who can inject life into singing.

His incantations or singing would evoke an enthusiastic response from the patrons who would not only honour him for his skills and scholarship but also benefit by attending the religious ceremony in which such melodious singing is being done. They might be attending just to hear the song and the music, but the collateral benefit of staying in place having a religious ambience and hearing religious discourses that are part of such ceremonies would benefit those who attend them (25).

26. He who knows the golden rule of singing the sacred hymns of Sam melodiously is blessed with gold and other material benefits (i.e. a person who can sing expertly with a melodious voice, acquires acclaim and its attendant fame, which in turn bring material benefits and prosperity in their wake). A sweet, melodious and charming voice is equivalent to 'gold' of Sam¹.

A person who knows what is the 'gold of Sam' (i.e. the fundamental quality that makes the singing so praise worthy and remunerative) is sure to get gold in this world (i.e. he would get worldly fame and all the material benefits that he desires, besides getting good name, fame, honour, respect and acclaim) (26).

[Note--¹The sweetness of the voice and the charm of the spoken word is like *gold* which is a metaphor for something that is the most precious and a much sought-after priceless asset that a man yearns to possess. A sweet, charming and pleasant voice, an articulate speech, as well as words that are well spoken makes a man famous and much liked by others as opposed to a person who lacks these qualities. Good oratory skills are much in demand in the world; even unpleasant things can be made acceptable if spoken rightly. A person's knowledge and wisdom is made beneficial for others only through the medium of the faculty of speech as is evident when we acquire any knowledge when we attend lectures by a teacher in a college or hear an enlightened preacher and philosopher. It is also evident when we consult a wise one on some matter that we have studied but are not able to understand; the wise one uses his faculty of speech to explain the intricacies to us. But even here, we would prefer someone who expresses himself in a pleasant manner as compared to a person who is rough in his manner of words no matter how wise and learned he might be.

In short, sweetness of voice and pleasantness of words are the essential qualities that make the faculty of speech honourable and praise worthy. They are like 'gold' or a precious asset that a man can possess, for with this asset he can easily make friends and influence others, and can acquire a good name for himself.]

27. A person who is aware of the glory, majesty, powers, authority, magnificence and importance that Sam possesses (i.e. he who understands about the importance and priceless value of having a good voice, of speaking articulately and properly, and of the words well spoken) gets the benefit of having these virtues¹.

Since Pran (i.e. the factor that keeps a creature alive; the vital wind/air element known as the breath) is an integral part of speech as it is the Pran that inspires and enables a person to speak, for it is obvious that without Pran no one would be able to speak a word, and since Pran is that factor that makes melodious and soulful singing of the hymns of Sam

possible, it is therefore the subtle Pran that is deemed to be adored, honoured and lauded when one sings the melodious and soulful hymns of the Sam².

Some erudite and wise scholars assert that this Pran is the same element of life (the essence and the basic and fundamental ingredient) that is present in food which gives the latter its value and famed glory. It is the same Pran which is established as the essence of food³.

[Note—¹A person who has understood the importance of good speaking, of a sweet voice and articulate speech, of the proper use of words, would endeavour to cultivate these qualities in him and put his voice and the faculty of speech to good use in a judicious, righteous and auspicious manner. A person's speech, his voice and his words are the ones that give him recognition, glory, fame, importance and majesty; it is his speech, voice and words that establish him as a renowned person who is well read, well spoken and well advised. In a similar vein, they can be the cause of his undoing when not properly used. In other words, it is his 'Vaani' that helps to establish him.

A person is known by his words, by what he speaks and how he speaks the words. His sayings give him renown and glory. Authority is expressed by the use of the words in the form of command. A person's erudition, wisdom, enlightenment, expertise and scholarship are known by what he says and how he says, instead of what he knows, because no matter how much a person knows about anything, if he is not able to properly express himself and convey the knowledge to others articulately, his knowledge would be futile and wasted.

²That is, it is the Pran which is actually glorified, by the medium of a sweet voice, when the Sam is being sung. If there was no Pran inside the body the person would not be able to speak a word, what to speak of singing anything. In other words, Pran is at the heart and soul of the faculty of speech that manifests itself in the form of a sweet voice that sings the sacred hymns melodiously; it is like the essence that enables the voice to showcase its virtues of sweetness and charm.

³It is the essential nutritious ingredients and energy present in any food which empowers it to help support life that makes it so essential and important as far as the creature is concerned; it is this quality of food that lends it its value and importance as a vital factor in the sustenance of life in a creature. If the food cannot sustain life it is as worthless and of no real value for the creature as a clod of mud. For example, what is known as 'junk food' has no Pran in it because it is of no or very little nutritious value for the creature, and in some cases it is even harmful though it is very tasty and filling. So when one praises food, one is actually praising its basic life-supporting virtues in terms of its nutrition and energy. The life-sustaining qualities of food are like Pran which is the life-sustaining factor in the body of the creature. Even as a dead body without life or Pran is good for nothing, any food which is not nutritious for the body is also worthless and no one would praise it and long for it. That is why the essential life in the body of a creature and the essential energy and nutrition in food are both called Pran and both are synonymous with each other. No life is sustainable without the energy provided by food eaten by the creature, and no food is useful for a body that has no life in it.

When the food is eaten, its essential 'life energy', known as its Pran, is extracted from it, and the rest of it is eliminated as waste matter. This Pran is the subtle and sublime component of food, while the rest is all

gross and disposable. Similarly, the life present in the body of a living creature is represented by the various vital winds in its body, and these winds are collectively called its Pran because it cannot survive without them.

Hence, when the creature uses the energy and nutrients present in food that gives it sufficient energy and stamina to do anything, in the present case to sing the Sam, then a wise soul is actually honouring that 'Pran' present in food, which has enabled and empowered it to do anything at all, when it sings or lauds the glory and importance of food.

The food provides energy and nourishment to all the organs, including the mind and the faculty of speech, enabling them to sing properly and coherently. If the mind is not getting proper nourishment, it would forget the hymns being sung midway; an improperly nourished body would be diseased and there might be so many causes for the interruption of the process of singing—e.g. cough, desire to urinate, thirst, hunger, pain, fever, hoarseness and other throat problems etc. All these are impediments to good singing. Hence the importance of food cannot be over emphasised.

Similarly, it is the vital wind that enables the man to sing or speak, and hence when a person is praised for his melodious singing, or for the use of sweet and pleasant words, then it is the vital wind known as Pran that is actually being honoured and praised.]

28. Now, the various rules and regulations to be followed for incantation of the auspicious and sacred hymns called the Pavmaan Stotras¹ are being described.

The 'Prastota' (the priest known as Ritwij who starts or initiates the incantation of the sacred hymns; the 'introducer' of the main chanting; the 'anchor' of the ritual) should say with devotion the following introductory phrases to invoke divine blessings before the actual incantation of the Sam (i.e. singing of the sacred hymns of the Vedas) begins — (i) ASATO MA SADGAMAYE (असतो मा सद्गमय) (take us away from falsehood towards truth); (ii) TAMASO MA JYOTIRGAMAYE (तमसो मा ज्योतिर्ममय) (take us from darkness towards light); and (iii) MRITYORMA-AMRITAM GAMAYE (मृत्योर्मांमृतं गमय) (take us from death towards immortality).

When the Prastota says the first statement 'take us from falsehood towards truth', he means that falsehood is equivalent to death, while truth is symbolic of eternity. Hence, he requests the patron God to whom the hymns are being offered to protect him from death and make him immortal.

When he says the second statement 'take me from darkness towards light', he implies that darkness is tantamount to death and light to life. Hence, he asks the God to free him from death, represented by the darkness of ignorance and delusions, and give him eternal life marked by enlightenment, wisdom, erudition and self-realisation.

When he makes the third statement 'take us from death towards immortality', there is nothing secret or implied in it; it is an open request to the patron God. This is the winding up statement, and it rounds up the request made by the Prastota in his earlier two statements.

This should be followed by the 'Udgata' (the priest who sings Udgith, which are the sacred hymns of the Sam Veda) singing or incanting hymns requesting divine blessings in the form of abundant food² that can provide him with the necessary nourishment and energy for himself as well as for the person on whose behalf the religious ceremony has been organised. A wise and erudite Udgata, who is well

acquainted with this fact, sings the Udgith with a particular desire or wish in mind, and if his offering is sincere, his desires are fulfilled.

This holistic philosophy about the ‘Pran’ (as has been described in this Brahmin) has the potential to make the entire world (i.e. everything in creation) accessible to a wise aspirant. An enlightened and wise person who knows about the essential truth and potentials of Sam (the heartfelt rendering of the sacred hymns) in the manner described here (in this whole Brahmin) never has to be dejected; he never fails to obtain anything desired or aspired for; he never fails to fulfill his hopes and expectations³ (28).

[Note :- ¹The word *Pavamaan* means that which purifies and sanctifies. Since ‘Som’, the invigorating and rejuvenating drink drunk at the beginning of the ritualistic singing of the Sam Veda hymns is considered holy, pure, divine and sanctified, it is also called Pavamaan. Similarly, the part of the sacred hymns said in the beginning, a sort of a prologue or introduction summarizing the sublime intent of the devotional singing that follows, is called Pavamaan, as is in the present case. That which moves constantly, which has movement as its intrinsic virtue, is also called Pavamaan—such as the wind or air element. AYUM VAAVA YAHA (VAYU) PAVATE SA PAVAMAAN (अयं वाव यः (वायु) पवते स पवमान) (Kaath., 22/10); AYUM VAYUHA PAVAMAANHA (अयं वायुः पवमानः) (Sath Path Brahmin, 2/5/1/5).

That is why, fire, wind, sun, moon, breath, and fire sacrifices are all called Pavamaans, because — (i) they are purifying, (ii) they are constantly and always on the move, (iii) and are uplifting— TRAYO HA VAA ETE SAMUDRAYAYAT PAVAMAANAAHA AGNIR-VAYURA-SAVAADITYAM— त्रयो ह वा एते समुद्रायत् पवमानाः अग्निर्वायुस्सावादित्यं (Jaimini Brahmin, 1/274); SOMO VAI PAVAMAANAAHA (सोमो वै पवमानाः) (Shatpath Brahmin, 2/2/3/22); PRANO VAI PAVMAANAH (प्राणो वै पवमानः) (Shatpath Brahmin, 2/2/1/6); and PAVAMAANO VAAVA YAGYAHA (पवमानो वाव यज्ञः) (Jaimini Brahmin, 1/119).

²*Food* does not mean only something that is eaten; it has a broad ramification. Everything needed to sustain life, called the Pran or soul present in the body, comes under this category. Food here implies both the food that supplies the necessary requirements of the body as well as the food that nourishes the Atma or soul of the creature, i.e. wisdom, erudition, knowledge and self-realisation about the truth of life and its essence.

³A wise man who understands the significance and importance of *Pran* which is a metaphor for the essential life-giving spark in a creature, the essence and the spirit of life, the vital forces in creation that make life meaningful and worthwhile, and the basic form that the cosmic life-giving energy takes, is duly respected and honored for his wisdom and scholarship as a learned and wise man wherever he goes. His renown spreads not only in his own land but even in far off places. Obviously nothing is inaccessible for such a renowned person.]

Canto 1/Brahmin 4

[The previous Brahmin no. 3 emphasised the profound and all-round importance and significance of Pran which is the most important factor in creation and is like its essence. Without Pran nothing can ever hope to live and acquire relevance in the creation. It is the most adorable, honourable, magnanimous and a selfless sustainer of all in this creation. It is also a

manifestation of Brahm, the invisible enigmatic divine entity that is the cause and essence of all that exists in this creation.

Now, in this Brahmin no. 4, the all-pervading nature of Brahm is being described along with the evolution of the physical, visible gross world and its four divisions or classifications. The fruit or reward of all Gyan (scholarship, erudition and knowledge) and Karma (action and deed) is this world, while the enlightenment about the reality (i.e. the falsehood of all this) is the provider of Moksha (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) for the soul of the creature. This sublime and eclectic quintessential knowledge about the supreme, transcendental Brahm is called 'Brahm-Vidya'. This Brahmin describes the genesis of the gross form of creation called the world. See also chapter 6, Subalopanishad of this book.]

1. This Atma (the cosmic Soul) was all alone in the form of the Purush (i.e. as the primary creator; the macrocosmic, invisible Male factor of Nature who was present even before the rest of the visible creation came into being; the Viraat Purush). He looked in all the directions but could not see anything besides his own self. So he said, 'Ahamasmi' (i.e. I am). That is why that Purush is defined as having 'Ahankar' or having ego, haughtiness, self importance, self pride, self praise and arrogance. This trait of having 'Ahankar' became an integral characteristic feature of all the creatures when they came into being from that primary Purush at the time of creation.

Further, the word 'I' got associated with this trait of having egotism, self praise, self importance, arrogance and pride (or Ahankar). That is why even today when anyone is called and asked who he is, he starts his reply to identify himself with the word 'I', and then adds his name to it (i.e. he says 'I am Ram, or I am John')¹.

That primary creator (Prajapati) had destroyed (eliminated, vanquished, overcome or burnt) all his sins. That is why he was known as 'Purush'².

A person who knows this fact about this Purush (as the Atma or soul that has vanquished all sorts of sins and negative traits, thereby becoming immaculate and pristine pure) is able to trounce or literally reduce to ashes those who try to prove themselves superior to that Purush³ (1).

[Note—¹The original identity of a creature is his Atma or soul which is an image of the supreme Brahm. So the first part of the identity statement, i.e. 'I' refers to a person's true identity which is his pure conscious self or Atma/soul. Then the second part, i.e. the name assigned to his physical being (body) by his parents, such as Ram or John, refers to his identity with a gross body that is recognised by this world. Further, at the time of creation the Viraat Purush had revealed himself as a man who is a true image of the former. So once again the true lineage of a person's soul comes from the Viraat Purush and the word 'I' refers to that original parent, the Viraat. The second half of the name, viz. Ram or John, refers to the parents who are responsible for the formation of the gross body of the man, such as his worldly father and mother. That is why the word 'I' is a constant element in all identification statements,

because no matter who the person is, his origin is from the same parent, the cosmic creator called the cosmic Purush or Prajapati Brahma.

Another interpretation is this—whether a person acknowledges it or not, everyone has some form of egotism in him; every person thinks that he is unique in some way and is different from others. This is however against the truth of creation—for whatever exists is a manifestation of one supreme indivisible entity known as Brahm. There is no scope of any notion of ‘this entity’ and ‘that entity’ as having two separate distinct existences; there is no duality between any two entities in this creation because the same supreme Brahm has revealed himself as the entire creation, and the same Atma or consciousness lives in all the creatures of this creation notwithstanding the form or shape they have for their bodies. Only wise and self-realised persons think in these terms. That is why it is said later here in this verse that when a man burns his sins, i.e. when he has overcome such negative traits as having any trace of Ahankar in him as described here, it is only then that he becomes as exalted as the Viraat Purush. Otherwise he remains confined to being simply a human being.

²The word *Purush* stands for such virtues as being manly, valorous, valiant, courageous, strong, resolute, stern, potential and powerful because only a resolute and determined man with strength of courage, firm conviction and steady determination would be resolute and committed enough to take a firm stand on any subject and go hammer and tong for what he decides to do—in this case, Prajapati’s decision was to eliminate sins and he resolutely did it. Having overcome negative traits, such as having Ahankar for instance, Prajapati was elevated to an exalted stature of the Viraat Purush. This ‘Purush’ was the primary creator and the macrocosmic gross body of the creation; he was a direct revelation of Brahm at the macro level, and it was from him that the rest of the creation came into being. Though the two words Purush and Prajapati are often used synonymously, there is a subtle difference between them—the former being a reference to the Viraat or the all inclusive macro form of the cosmos, while the latter refers to the creator who came into being from this Viraat and was responsible for the creation of the rest of the visible form of creation. From the perspective of the Purans, the Viraat Purush is known as Lord Vishnu from whose navel was born the Prajapati Brahma, the creator, atop a divine lotus. Vishnu is treated as the supreme Brahm, but Brahma is not.

³If any person tries to justify that his body is his true identity and not his soul, then such persons are ignorant of the universal truth of the Atma and existence. Hence, they are morally defeated by those who are wise, erudite and self-realised. In other words, such ignorant and deluded people are left behind in the race for liberation and deliverance from the bondages that tie a creature to this entrapping world of an endless cycle of death and birth by those who are more proficient in the knowledge about Brahm, the Atma and the creation.

The opening line of this Brahmin resembles the opening lines of Brahmin 2— ‘In the beginning, there was nothing’. This opening sentence prepares us for the narration of one of the various metaphysical versions of the genesis of the gross, physical aspect of creation of this world.

The Holy Bible says about creation as follows—‘Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or

powers; all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist' (Colossians, 1/15-17).]

2. Then he (the primary first Purush) became afraid. That is why a lonely man gets frightened of his loneliness, or is afraid when he finds himself alone without company. Then he thought to himself that 'if there is no one except me, from whom should I fear?'

As soon as he realised this, his fear was dispelled because 'fear' comes from others, and not from one's own self. When there is no one else, there is no cause or fear of getting harmed from others (2).

[Note—Since the creator Prajapati had assumed the body with sense organs like that of a man at the time of creation, he had the same ignorance that the man has—viz. that he is subject to death as he had not realised the prime imperishable and eternal nature of his true self, the Atma. That is why even today a man gets afraid when he is alone. *Fear* is an element that comes from somebody else for no one is afraid from his own self. Then Prajapati began to ponder the reason for his fears—he thought to himself 'Well, if there is no one besides me, i.e. my Atma, then from whom I should fear?' This enlightenment dispelled all causes of fear in him. That is why even today wise and self-realised men are free from any kind of fear.

Now the question arises from whom did Prajapati get this wisdom? The answer is that he got it by contemplation and meditation. Further, the origin of Prajapati was from the truthful Brahm and therefore he had noble and auspicious 'genes' in him that made him contemplative and wise by nature. It is also evident in the world today that those born in noble families with a history of nobility, auspiciousness and virtuousness usually acquire these characteristics themselves. So when he faced some problem, he began to ponder why that problem arose in the first place.

It has been said earlier that Prajapati had successfully vanquished all his sins (verse no.1), so his intellect was freed from the corrupting influences that hinder the light of wisdom to shine through. A corrupted mind cannot think properly and in the correct direction. When Prajapati became afraid, then instead of panicking he pondered over the cause of his fears and discovered that it was due to his ignorance about the fact that he had erroneously thought that (a) he would die or that his body would perish, (b) there was a competitor for him who would snatch away his rights, and (c) he was surrounded by sins and can fall into their traps. But when he contemplated he discovered that his truthful identity was not his body but his pure conscious Atma which is imperishable, that the Atma in him is the same as the Atma in the other person making that other person an image of his own self and thereby removing any scope of competition or fear, and that the sins are accumulated only when this Atma gets involved in the deeds done by the body and not otherwise.]

3. Since he was alone, he felt lonely, bored and disenchanted. That is why a lonely person feels lonely and gets bored and disenchanted with his loneliness. Therefore he wished to have someone as his companion. So he transformed his unitary, unisexual form into two forms—viz. the form of a male and that of a female who are in close embrace. That is, he divided his own body into a male (or a husband) and a female (or a wife)¹.

The wise sage Yagyavalkya² says— 'That is why this body is like one half of the husk that covers the grain of a cereal such as rice or

wheat'. The grain of rice has the seed covered by the husk which protects it. This rice grain acts as a seed for the next generation of rice plant. But it needs the protection of the husk even as a woman needs the protection of the man. The space inside the husk is like the 'sky' or Akash element, while the grain present in this space is the female aspect of Nature and the husk itself is the male. It is by the union of the male and the female that this creation is possible³ (3).

[Note :-¹Before the man became a husband, i.e. before he marries a woman, he is the other half of his own self. That is, he is like that Viraat Purush called the Prajapati prior to his splitting himself into two halves— i.e. he is lonely, bored and disenchanted. That is why also an unmarried man is like paddy without the grain, or a pea-pod without its seed. In other words, an unmarried man cannot reproduce his own self as his progeny and remains unsatisfied and disenchanted like the Prajapati. But it must be noted that this applies to the situation when Prajapati had 'some desire', and that desire was to have company. This company resulted in setting off a chain of events that resulted in the creation of this huge creation of living creatures. Had Prajapati no desires, he would have remained in peace with himself. This brings to an interesting deduction—viz. the root cause of all troubles is 'desire', and root cause of desire is not remaining contented with what we have.

²The etymology of the word *Yagyavalkya* is = 'Yagya' meaning a religious fire sacrifice, and 'Valka' means one who speaks or preaches. That is, a person who speaks about religious or spiritual matters is called Yagya+valk = Yagyavalkya. Sage Yagyavalkya's other name was Daivрати. He was the son of Brahma, the creator.

³There was nothing in the beginning except the Viraat Purush or the primary macrocosmic Male aspect of Nature. This Viraat Purush was the cosmic gross body of creation. When he decided that he needed to create, he became eager to find ways to implement his wishes. This wish of his transformed itself into a female. Since he was the male aspect of creation, the other half that he created became his counterpart, the female. We deduce here that the female was the 'other half' of the same Viraat Purush much like an amoeba splitting itself into two units, both similar to each other.

Another perspective is that Prajapati, the creator who is regarded as the first male, had an auspicious desire to initiate creation. This desire of his manifested itself as the first female named 'Shatrupa', which literally means one who is a true image or personification of the auspicious desires of that Prajapati who had the virtues of truthfulness, righteousness, virtuousness and auspiciousness. Therefore, that lady known as Shatrupa, the personified form of Prajapati's desires, then became his wife as described in this verse. The male counterpart of Shatrupa was the first human male named Manu who was an image of Brahma the creator or Prajapati. Manu and Shatrupa were the first gross forms of the cosmic Viraat Purush and Prakriti who had manifested themselves as the latter respectively. That is why it is said that Shatrupa was both the daughter of Prajapati (because she was created by him) as well as his wife (because she was the wife of Manu who himself was a manifestation of Prajapati).

The process of creation, in the first instance when it all started, was like a grain of rice or wheat coming out from inside the covering of the husk, or an oyster opening its shell into two, when the seed or the pearl matures respectively. From the perspective of the Purans, from the

supreme creator Brahm was produced the Viraat Purush (the macrocosmic Male) and Prakriti (his female counterpart), and from Viraat Purush was produced Brahma, the creator, and Savitri, his female counterpart. Prajapati was another name for Brahma because he was the care taker of the subjects of creation. This Prajapati became Manu, and Shatrupa became his wife as described above. There were the first humans produced by Brahma, the creator.]

4. That woman wondered, 'Why does this man wish to have conjugal relationship with me though he has created me from his own body? It would be good that I hide myself somewhere to avoid him'. So she became a cow, and the Purush (male) became a bull. From them were produced calves that matured into cows and bullocks.

Again in order to hide herself from him, she transformed herself into a mare, and the bull became a stallion.

She then metamorphosed herself into a she-ass, and the Purush (as the stallion) into an ass; from them were produced the hoofed animals.

As a next step she became a she-goat, and the ass transformed into a he-goat. When she became a ewe, he became a ram.

In this way, the goats and sheep (and other animals classified as domestic cattle) were created. Similarly, ants and all other creatures that form a couple were created (4).

5. After this creation was put into place, that supreme Purush who had manifested himself as Prajapati became aware of the fact that all this myriad creation is his own handiwork. So he thought that 'He is creation' (because the creation was created by him from his own body, and therefore the creation resembled Prajapati or the Viraat Purush, as is very clear in verse no. 3 and 4, and was therefore a part of him, or an image of him). This is how he (Prajapati or Purush) came to be known as 'Srishti' (i.e. creation). That is, the creation and the creator are synonymous with each other. A person who knows the secret mystery of this creation as described above gets fame, majesty and a good reputation of being a sagacious and wise scholar in this (Prajapati's) creation, because he is aware of its hidden secrets (5).

[Note—This verse endorses the universal theory of Vedanta that the creator created this creation from his own self in his own image, and then subtly entered it as its Atma or consciousness that is uniformly present throughout it. Hence, there is nothing that exists that is beyond the creator and not pervaded by him.]

6. [In order to create the Gods who would preside over this creation—] He (Prajapati) vigorously rubbed the cavity of his mouth with his two palms. This rubbing produced the 'fire'. That is why the inside of the palms as well as the cavity of the mouth have no hairs. Also, since the mouth was the crucible where fire of life was created, the 'womb' (of the female), which provides the necessary 'fire' or the vital spark of life that initiates creation in the form of life in an embryo, is also without any hair.

However, those priests presiding over fire sacrifices who ask that the different Gods (such as the Fire God, Indra etc.) be worshipped separately do not know that all the Gods are incorporated in and

represented by the one and the only supreme Lord of creation. [That is, the worship of the one supreme transcendental Brahm is equivalent to worshipping his numerous manifestations as different Gods.] It is that 'one and the only one' supreme transcendental Lord who has created the varied world. All the Gods are nothing else but myriad versions of that one and the only one Lord God.

Whatever fluid or liquid form that exists was created by him from his sperm; it personifies his 'Tej' or energy and vitality, potentials and potent, and it has also taken the form of Som (the invigorating and rejuvenating drink that is used at religious ceremonies; the ambrosia or elixir of life)¹.

Som is 'Anna' or the food that exist in creation².

Similarly, the Fire is the sustainer and caretaker of creation, i.e. it is the essence that is present in food which provides the creation with its vigour and vitality³.

This is a fantastically majestic, stupendously magnificent and a grand creation of the supreme, transcendental, inexplicable and enigmatic Brahm. It is a marvel and the strange mystery that Brahma the creator created the immortal Gods though he himself is subject to death⁴.

That is why it is called a most wonderful, a greatly mysterious, a stupendously fascinating and a marvelously wondrous creation (because so many mysterious things have happened which are beyond explanation and logic, having no plausible and explicable explanation for their happening). A person, who knows this creation in the way it is, gets fame and glory as well as honour and respect as being a wise, sagacious and learned one who is well versed in the intricate mysteries of creation and its truth (6).

[Note--¹That is, *liquids and fluids* such as water, honey and nectar contain the vital life-sustaining and nourishing factors of life that represent the 'sperm' of the cosmic creator, or the vital life forces that have the potential not only to conceive life but also to sustain, develop and nourish it. In other words, water and other forms of liquids or fluids are synonymous with life; they inherently harbour life. This observation is obvious because no life is possible anywhere if there was no liquid or fluid element in Nature. The life would have parched itself to death. When scientists search for signs for life in distant corners of the universe, they look for traces of water more than anything else.

²*Som* is a metaphor for a nourishing liquid that is a form of fluid food that provides nourishment to the creation. The creator created water which harboured the primary signs of life in this creation and was the essential necessity for the production of food that would sustain the creation created. Without water no plant can take in its nourishment from the soil, and without water this absorbed nourishment cannot move up the body of the plant through its different vessels such as xylem and phloem. Similarly, water is absolutely essential for the living creature; blood consists essentially of water and it is the latter that helps the food eaten to get digested and transported in the body so as to nourish all the part of it equally. Som is a liquid, and therefore it symbolises all the 'liquids' created by the creator representing the life sustaining qualities which are exemplified by water.

³In other words, without *fire* the food can neither be cooked nor be digested by the creature, and the life-sustaining energy present in food is in turn the 'fire' that keeps the lamp of life burning.

⁴Every form of creation that has an origin will certainly have an end, and this includes not only *Brahma* but also Vishnu the sustainer and Shiva the concluder. These Trinity Gods have a beginning and therefore an end, though their life span is much greater than other creatures. The *immortal Gods* referred here are not some kind of supernatural Beings with a divine body residing somewhere in heavens, because then they would also be subjected to the same rule of conclusion that applies to Brahma, but refer to the auspicious virtues and immortal qualities that are truthful and immortal because they are possessed by Brahm who is the supreme authority that transcends this mortal creation. This Brahm predates this creation and remain even when it concludes. In other words, these 'immortal Gods' refer to the quality of immortality that the truthful Brahm possesses. When the time comes, a new Brahma would immerge form this Brahm. The fact that Brahma, the patriarch of this visible creation, is subjected to death or conclusion is very clearly mentioned in Brahmin no. 2, verse nos. 1 and 7. Refer also to Tripadvibhut Mahanarayan Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 10-11.]

7. In the beginning, this creation was nameless and formless (i.e. it had no attributes and definitions). Thereafter, when it was revealed it got a name and form¹.

That is why even today, anything is known only when we know about its name and form because we need both to describe an entity. We can know about anything only when we become aware of its form, its name and its characteristic features and attributes; it is impossible to describe anything we see or know about without assigning any name or form to it, or assigning any special features characteristic to it.

That primary attributeless entity (i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm who has entered the creation as its Atma or life) has entered the body of a living creature and uniformly pervades throughout it, even till the edge of the nail, just like a scalpel's or a razor's base is embedded in its wooden handle, and fire is inherently but imperceptibly present in a latent form in the firewood or established on the bed of the fire pit, but it is not possible for anyone to actually see that entity (i.e. the Atma) in a tangible and visible form (because it is inexplicably hidden from view, being microscopic fine, subtle and imperceptible).

That esoteric and sublime entity (i.e. the Atma residing as the pure consciousness in the living creature) is called 'Pran' because it infuses life in a creature, but it has different names and attributes depending upon the different functions it performs. For example, it is called Pran, which is the process of breathing, because it injects life in the body by bringing in oxygen, ventilating the lungs, collecting all the poisonous gases from inside the body and helping their elimination when the breath is exhaled. Similarly, the same Pran (consciousness or vital life in a creature) is called 'speech' because it carries out the function of speaking, it is called 'sight' because it carries out the function of seeing, it is called 'hearing' because it carries out the function of hearing, and it is called 'Mana' (mind and intellect) because it thinks, ponders and contemplates. All these different names assigned to the same Pran are the various aliases or nicknames given to it according to the functions it carries out in the body. They define only one or the other aspect of Pran, but they do not define it in its entirety. This definition of Pran as being speech, sight, hearing etc.

is a fractured view of Pran; they are not the complete and comprehensive definition of Pran if considered separately.

Thus, anyone who adores, honours, reveres and worships Pran with these separate names, having these independent identities and existences, does not know, or is not aware of its truthful form and essential nature because all these apparently different names which describe different virtues, qualities, characteristic features or attributes belong not to different entities but to the same entity known as Pran².

This Atma (i.e. the pure conscious factor of life and the most essential and vital aspect of creation without which nothing can be defined as alive and worthwhile) is therefore the only worthy entity that is needed to be known by everyone because when one comes to know about it, the essential nature of the entire world can be understood by him³.

Even as a lost animal can be found by following its footprint (pug mark) on the ground, a person can deduce everything about the world following the clues provided by the knowledge of the Atma. He who knows this basic tenet gets fame and glory as a wise and enlightened person in the world (7).

[[Note--¹That is, in the beginning the world as we know it today had no form, name and attributes, because Brahm who was present before the appearance of the creation has no form, name and attributes. When the latter decided to start the process of creation, he created this world in his own image, i.e. as being without a form and attributes. That is why the first manifestation of creation at the macrocosmic level was Hiranyagarbha (the macrocosmic subtle body of the cosmos), and from the latter emerged the Viraat Purush (the macrocosmic gross body of the entire creation and from whom the rest of the visible creation came into being) as well as Prakriti (Nature in its vast form). None of these entities had any form and attributes that can be conclusively described in words. When the process of creation went ahead, these indescribable entities transformed or crystallised themselves into forms that could be described and assigned certain characteristics because they had physical features, verifiable qualities and discernible attributes. The name given to each individual entity of creation helped to distinguish one from the other so as not to create confusion, but really they were indistinguishable because all of them were 'an image of the formless Brahm'. In short, what was primarily unqualified, having no name and form, was made qualified with a certain name and form.

²That is, the faculties of hearing, speaking, seeing etc. are the different functions carried out by the single entity known as Pran or pure conscious Atma which infuses life inside the body of a living creature. All these functions help the Atma to live a normal life and it would be impossible for any living being to survive without the Pran performing all these functions in its various manifestations. Therefore, to say that a man has Pran or life in him because he can see is a misrepresentation of the truthful fact about Pran because 'sight' is only one of the many functions that Pran performs. Hence, the Pran should be taken in its entirety as the life-infusing force in the body of a creature, and not as some individual function that the body carries out.

³It is a constant refrain in the Upanishads that this Atma is the only conscious factor and the only truth in existence, while everything that is non-Atma is non-truth. Even as any wise man would endeavour to pursue truth and not falsehood, a wise follower of the path of spiritualism

should pursue this Atma to the exclusion of everything else. For example, one should attempt to acquire gold and not brass though the latter also shines like gold. An ignorant man can be misled to believe that a piece of brass is valuable because it looks like gold, but it is impossible to mislead a goldsmith.

See also canto 1, Brahmin 6 in this context.]

8. In this way, it (the Atma) is dearer than one's own son, one's own wealth, and all other things put together. If a person loves anything else more than his own Atma residing in his own bosom, then he virtually loses his own pure self; he forgets about his Atma which is his most precious asset.

A spiritual aspirant who worships, honours and reveres his prime Atma, which is his true self and pure consciousness, and shows it more respect, love and importance than anything else in this world, then such a person never dies; he becomes immortal (because he would have realised that his true identity is the Atma which is immortal and imperishable) (8).

9. [The following verses expound and elucidate upon 'Brahm-Vidya', or the knowledge pertaining to the supreme, transcendental, enigmatic and sublime quintessential divine entity in creation known as Brahm—] Wise and erudite people have asserted that it is believed that by acquiring the knowledge known as the Brahm-Vidya, a person 'acquires everything he wishes or aspires for'. What is the basis of this assertion? Has anybody become an expert in Brahm-Vidya by which he has got everything he desired or aspired for? [Or, what is that special quality in Brahm, the knowledge of which makes the man so competent and potent that he can attain anything that he aspires for? What does he know that is not known to others which makes him so powerful and wise that he is capable of doing everything?] (9).

10. In the beginning there was only one entity known as 'Brahm'. [Compare this with the opening lines of canto 1, Brahmin 1, verse no. 1; and Brahmin 4, verse no. 1 and 7.] Realising this fact that 'I am Brahm', he transformed himself into all the myriad forms that the creation took; he visualised that the entire creation with its varied forms and innumerable features is nothing but his own image or his own personification¹.

Amongst the Gods, all those who realised who Brahm actually was became one like him in his likeness². Similarly, amongst ordinary humans and the exalted sages and seers, all those who acquired his truthful knowledge (i.e. those who became aware of who Brahm truthfully and essentially was), all such people became an image of Brahm (i.e. they became as wise, enlightened, exalted and omniscient as Brahm; they became self-realised).

Sage Vamdeo said, 'By knowing him (Brahm), I have become one like (or equivalent to) Manu and Sun'. [That is, he felt that he has become as exalted and respected as the first human male in the form of Manu, and also like the glorious, splendorous and dazzling celestial body known as the Sun that gives light to the entire world and at the same time is a metaphor for illumination and light of knowledge.]

Even now, anyone who believes in the dictum 'I am Brahm' (which indeed everyone is, except that only a few wise and enlightened people realise this truth) becomes universally one with the rest of the creation (because the entire creation, including that person, is a non-dual image of the one Supreme Being called Brahm). Even the Gods are not able to defeat him, simply because such a wise and enlightened person becomes a de-facto image of those Gods themselves; he becomes a synonym for their own exalted stature and being, and he represents their (God's) own Atma.

A person who distinguishes between himself and others becomes equivalent to an animal (i.e. he lacks wisdom, erudition, intelligence and knowledge of the truth). Even as the different animals serve humans, the unwise and stupid human, who is no better than an animal in his ignorance of the truth, too serves different Gods³.

If one animal is stolen, a person feels bad. If more than one animal is stolen, it would look worse. That is why the Gods do not want that people acquire a comprehensive and complete knowledge pertaining to Brahm (because if they do, they would become wise and enlightened and respectable and exalted like these Gods themselves: then who would serve these selfish Gods?)⁴ (10).

[Note—¹Since Brahm pervades in everything in a uniform and universal manner, since everything that exists has its genesis in Brahm and is nothing else but an image of Brahm, since Brahm embodies the whole creation from the minutest to the most colossus in his own self, and since Brahm has the unique characteristic of being omnipresent, immanent, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. which are some of the numerous and uncountable virtues and attributes of Brahm, this fact that he transformed himself into all the available and imaginable forms in this creation upon the realisation of his magnificent and stupendous potentials is absolutely feasible and truthful depiction of events.

²This statement is very significant and important, being profound in its import and reach as well as in its mystery. The man has sense organs, and the various Gods had taken up their symbolic residences in his body at the time of creation as has been clearly said in Aitareyopanishad of the Rig Veda tradition (published by this humble author in the volume dealing with the Rig Veda Upanishads in this series). They then became the presiding deities or the patron Gods of different parts of his body. When a person's pure self, the conscious Atma, tries to think of something different than these Gods and their comfort zones, the latter feel threatened and try all the tricks they know of to lure the Atma away from its enhanced spiritual stature and turn it towards the demeaning and degrading pleasures and attractions of the deluding artificial world that would satisfy the need for self gratification of the sense organs over which these Gods preside. The Gods try their best to prevent the Atma in seeking self-realisation and they keep it trapped in the vortex of worldly pleasures and enjoyments to serve their own vested interests. This is the implied meaning of the statement that the Gods prevent the man from getting a comprehensive knowledge of Brahm which is tantamount to complete enlightenment. Since the Gods preside over the sense organs, the latter always try to pull the wise man towards the world and away from the supreme Brahm residing in his bosom as his Atma or soul, because in such a situation when a wise man turns away from the material world of sensual pleasure, he would become a recluse and a renunciate, a situation which the Gods do not like because then there

would be no one to serve them through the gratification of their respective sense organs over which they presides. Once enlightened, the man would not serve these Gods. In other words, he would prefer to do Tapa (or penances and austerities), suffer hardships, renounce all his attraction towards the world, treat his foe as well as his friend alike, would shun gratification of the sense organs and indulging in all sorts of sins and evils just to provide comfort and pleasure to the sense organs of the body— all of which the Gods would not like because they have become accustomed to being appeased and pampered and served. See note no. 4 below.

³The apparent difference between a God, who is an exalted Being, and an ordinary human being, is the level of wisdom and erudition that they have. While a God is a metaphor for someone who is wise and self-realised and possesses auspicious virtues, the word 'human' is ordinarily used for those who think that they have a body which is their 'self', instead of their soul or Atma, and who indulge in the pursuit of this world and self gratification as if this was the ultimate object and end of their taking birth. Humans are generally shrouded by the veil of ignorance about their own truthful identity or their pure conscious self called their Atma, and this ignorance eclipses their spiritual wisdom and erudition. If a man becomes wise and self-realised, he acquires the same potentials that the Gods possess.

⁴As has been pointed out above in note no. 2, these Gods represent the various vital functions carried out by the different sense organs of the body. These sense organs have an inherent tendency to enjoy the pleasures and comforts that come with indulgence in this world of material objects. In case a man develops renunciation from them because he has realised their falsehood and the illusionary nature of worldly relationships such as son, mother, father, friend, wife, family etc., resulting in his withdrawing into his own self and spending his time on meditation, then these patron Gods would cease to enjoy the material comforts of the sensual world that they are accustomed to. That is why they feel annoyed if any person develops enlightenment, and they do their best to create hurdles in his spiritual path of self-realisation.]

11. In the beginning this Brahm was alone. [Refer Brahmin 1, verse no. 1 and Brahmin 4, verse nos. 1, 7 and 10 in this context.] But being alone, he was unable to display and enhance the greatness of his 'Vibhuti', or was unable to unfold and spread his magnificent glory and majesty, his supreme authority and prowess, his unmatched fame and excellence, his stupendous potentials and supernatural powers. He therefore decided to initiate some steps to propagate these virtues, and to ensure that they get established and protected at the same time. So (he first created the Brahmins who represented him and then) he created the Kshatriya class¹.

Amongst the Gods that were created as representative of this Kshatriya class were Varun (the Water God), Indra (the king of Gods), Som (the Moon God), Rudra (one of the forms of Lord Shiva, the concluder, in his angry form), Parjanya (the Rain God), Mritu (the Death God), Yam (the God of justice after death; the senior God who directs Mritu), and Ishan (Lord Shiva himself)².

That is why the Kshatriya class is considered the best (amongst the four classes into which the society is divided, because they represent these Gods who preside over the day to day functioning of the creation and take

care of its routine welfare and conduct). That is also why during a sacrificial fire ceremony called 'Rajsuya Yagya', a Brahmin priest is seated at a level lower than where the chief patron of the sacrifice, i.e. the king who is a Kshatriya by class, is seated, and the Brahmin priest shows respect and honour to the king³.

This Brahm, represented by the Brahmin priest, is symbolic of the cosmic womb from where Kshatriya has been born. [Since all the creatures were born as off springs of the supreme Brahm, the Kshatriyas were also conceived in the womb of Brahm.] That is why, though during the course of the performance of the Rajsuya Yagya, a Kshatriya is deemed to be senior to a Brahmin, but after the rituals are over the former (i.e. the Kshatriya) takes the shelter or the blessing of the latter (i.e. the Brahmin)⁴.

A Kshatriya who harms or injures or causes any injustice to a Brahmin is deemed to have harmed the foundation from which he had taken birth, or which was the cause for his coming into being. He has literally insulted his own mother (which is an unpardonable and an abhorable sin). Such a person who harms or commits violence against his best foundation, against his best means of support and succour as well as his best well-wisher (i.e. against a Brahmin representing Brahma), becomes very sinful and despicable (11).

[Note—(a) ¹Brahma, the supreme creator, created the *Kshatriya* class in his own likeness, i.e. as having the same features as the other class that he created and which represented him, and that was the Brahmin class. He thought to himself that it was his duty to create, and as Prajapati, to sustain his subjects once produced or created by him. So the first class of men was the Brahmins who derived their name from the fact that they represented Brahma and were as exalted as him. These Brahmins helped to spread the glory of Brahm, but they needed protection from other negative elements of creation, such as the demons. This fact that demons were also as an integral part of creation as the Gods and humans is borne out by the fact that all three had approached Brahma, the patriarch of creation, requesting him to tell them some code of conduct to be implemented in life as mentioned in Canto 5, Brahmin 1 of this Upanishad. So the initial class of people needed someone who would give them protection from evil forces, and thus were created the Kshatriyas.

There is another way at looking at this stanza as follows—In the beginning there was only Brahm. Earlier it has been said in verse no. 3-5, 7 and 10 that Brahm transformed himself into numerous forms, all of them in his own likeness. He produced first the Viraat Purush who revealed himself in the form of Vishnu. From Vishnu was created Brahma, and from the latter was created Manu (the first human male) and Shatrupa (the first human female), and finally from this couple came into being the whole of the human race. Since Manu was a direct descendant of Brahma—who himself got his name because he was a revelation of the eternal Brahm who is the un-manifested and nameless supreme, transcendental Being—he was called a Brahmin. His descendents were called after him as Brahmins. These earlier generations lived a righteous life like their father Brahma, the creator. But as population increased, competition set in, giving rise to jealousy and ill-will as desire for material comforts increased, and with limited supply, animosity increased proportionately and exponentially. Then Prajapati, the guardian of

creation, needed someone to keep control over warring factions of Brahmins. So he created the Kshatriya class. The word '*Kshatriya*' has '*Kshatra*' as its first half, meaning a ceremonial umbrella placed on the head of a king, symbolising his temporal power and authority. In order to control chaos and recklessness amongst the members of the society who were initially only Brahmins, power and strength were needed along with the authority to implement the laws regulating their behaviour. Hence, Brahm created the Kshatriya class and empowered them sufficiently to protect the Brahmins, first from infighting amongst themselves, and later on to protect the society as a whole when the necessity would arise for the creation of other classes of society to delegate and distribute the complex work of daily humdrum life between them for its smooth functioning. That is why those who were the most exalted and capable amongst the first phase of creation, i.e. the Gods listed in this verse, were assigned the job of protecting the creation, and were therefore called or classified as '*Kshatriyas*', i.e. those who have the so-called 'ceremonial umbrella, representing power, strength and authority, over their heads'.

²The Gods that are likened to the Kshatriyas are assigned the job of giving protection to the creation. For example Varun, the Water God, gives the essential life-sustaining elixir called the water which not only has the potential to conceive the creation in its bosom but also sustain, protect and nourish the creation that it harbours; it gives protection against drought and dehydration. Similarly, Indra is the God of the sense organs and all other Gods who preside over these sense organs of the creature, because he is the 'king of Gods'. Som is the Moon God who rules over the mind and the heart, indicating that a king should use his mind and intelligence as well as his heart symbolising the virtues of mercy and compassion while dealing with his subjects. Rudra is the patron God of anger which becomes necessary to enforce discipline and the rule of law; Parjanya, who is the God of clouds, controls the rain which is like the elixir of life falling down upon the earth from the heaven; Mritu represents capital punishment for those deserve it; and Ishan, the Lord who is one of the forms of Shiva, symbolises a king or Lord who enforces the laws of Dharma relentlessly (which means that Lord Ishan is one who upholds such virtues as righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility of thought and action etc.) without any compromise or bias, because the word Ishan also means an insignia, or the one who upholds the insignia of Dharma.

³Normally Brahmins are seated at a level higher than the Kshatriya class, because in Hindu hierarchical society, Brahmins are senior to the rest of the three classes consisting of the Kshatriyas, followed by the Vaishyas, and finally the Shudras who are at the lower end of this social hierarchy.

⁴Since Brahma is like a mother to the Kshatriya class and is also represented by a Brahmin, it follows that the Brahmin deserves the same honour and reverence that one reserves for one's mother. Further, since the Brahmins also represent Brahma—the old grandfather patriarch of creation who had created not only the humans but also the rest of the visible creation and its inhabitant creatures—they are like a father for the Kshatriyas. Hence, the Kshatriya should revere the Brahmins as their parents, both as a mother as well as a father.

(b) Verse nos. 11-15 describes how the four classes in Hindu society came into being. The four sections into which the Hindu society has been

divided by ancient sages/seers are the following—(a) Brahmins (b) Kshatriyas, (c) Vaishyas, and (d) Shudras. These are called the four *Varnas*. The division was done to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins*—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

*The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) ‘Riju’-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) ‘Tapa’-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) ‘Santosh’-be contented and satisfied, (4) ‘Kshamaa’-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) ‘Sheel’-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) ‘Jitendriya’-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) ‘Data’-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) ‘Gyani’-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) ‘Dayaalu’-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahmin.] An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject.

These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped as well as feels the pain equally if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. The four classes had specific jobs cut for them so that the society could function smoothly.

The Brahmins have their origin from the mouth of Brahma the creator. Since the mouth is used to give advice and teach others, the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guides to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exist, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas, who were created from the arms of Brahma, were those sons of his who would provide the needed protection and security to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour to provide for the maintenance and financial and material well being of the society for merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life. So he

created the Vaishyas from his thighs, symbolising labour, to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras who were born from Brahma's feet symbolising service.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.]

12. That Brahma (now being referred to as the Brahmin class), even after creating the Kshatriya class (as described in verse no. 11), was not able to develop properly, i.e. he lacked the required wealth needed to sustain the growth of population. Therefore, he created the class known as the 'Vaishyas¹'. The other name of a Vaishya is 'Ganash' —that is why Vaishyas, or the trading and wealth-creating class, worships Lord Ganesh² as their patron deity. Amongst the Gods³, Vasu, Rudra, Aditya, Vishwadev and Marut are called Vaishyas, and their patron God is Ganesh (12).

[Note--¹When population increased, Brahm in his manifestation as Brahma, the patriarch creator who was represented in this world by the Brahmins, found the need to delegate the job of doing commerce, agriculture and animal husbandry to a select group of people from amongst themselves, who were later on designated with a special title known as *Vaishyas*. By and by, these special groups of Brahmins who were assigned the duty of looking after the material needs of the other Brahmins were called Vaishyas. Since a single man could not do this task requiring much diligent effort and enterprise, a group was involved in any such function. For example, to do farming many hands were needed, right from the tilling of land, sowing of seed, up to harvesting, thrashing of grain, storing it in the granary and distributing it to those who need it, i.e. marketing and selling it.

²Hence the word *Ganesh* is used to describe Vaishyas because 'Gana' means 'numbers', or 'a great number of people who worked together as juniors to their masters', helping them with their work. The Vaishyas work collectively in large numbers, because any kind of trading activity, farming, animal husbandry or any kind of wealth-creating activity requires the help of a chain of workers. It is not possible for any single individual to accomplish success in commerce single handedly. That is why they are also called as 'worshipper of numbers', or 'experts with counting of numbers' represented by their patron God, Lord Ganesh.

³The Gods that take care of the different aspects of providing the daily needs of creation and sustaining it, are collectively called Vaishyas. There are eight *Vasus* who are the patron Gods of various forms of material wealth such as gold, gems and precious stones, as well as the essential ingredients of life such as the elements of fire and water, and Kuber who is the God's treasurer and responsible for the safe custody of these assets of creation.

Rudra is the angry form of Shiva; anger is necessary sometime to fight for one's commercial rights.

Aditya is the Sun which is obviously needed for agriculture and giving day light to the creatures. It is very obvious that without the Sun life would be impossible to sustain in this world.

The *Vishwadev* means ‘the God of the world’; the Vishwadev are the different Gods of all the mythological worlds in creation—such as the subterranean world, the terrestrial world and the celestial world.

Marut is the Wind God; there are forty-nine in number. Air or wind is very necessary for everything, from the formation of clouds which produce rain to help the earth to sustain life and maintain the water level, to the presence of the very notion of life inside the body because it is the vital winds present in it that enables the body to carry out its functions in the required manner. The importance of the air/wind element can be judged from the fact that ‘breath’, which is another name of air passing through the nostrils, is the most important factor for life in any human being; it is called his Pran or life.

All these Gods look after all the material needs and well being of creation. So they are like the Vaishyas because they look after the nitty-gritty of creation.]

13. Even after this (i.e. even after the creation of the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas), he (i.e. Brahma the creator in his manifestation as Brahmin, the senior most class of humans in this creation) was not satisfied as he felt that maturity in his planning has not being fully obtained. Then he, therefore, created the fourth class of people called the Shudras. The God named Pusha is of the Shudra category amongst all the Gods. This earth is Pusha, because all that exist here is served by the earth. The earth forms the foot of the Viraat Purush; the Shudras also represent the foot—or the lowest level of society. Even as the foot is meant to serve the rest of the body and helps the body to stand on its own, the Shudras help the rest of the three classes to stand up and carry on with their assigned tasks (13).

(14). Even after all this, Brahma, the creator, felt that his efforts to complete the process of creation have not reached their full maturity. So he then produced ‘Dharma’ representing the virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility of thought and conduct, goodness, propriety and probity as well as the laws that govern or define these virtues and their application in the society which give ‘Shrey’, i.e. happiness, good fortunes, auspiciousness, prosperities, glory, majesty, credit, eminence, goodness etc. to the people. This Dharma element was the so-called ceremonial umbrella (known as the Kshatra) of even the Kshatriya class of the society, because only those kings who were stringent followers of the righteous path could prosper and become famous as well as acquire majesty and honour in the world. The rest of the kings who did not have the so called ceremonial umbrella of Dharma over their heads sunk into oblivion. Therefore, there is nothing better than Dharma.

Even if a man has no physical strength, no wealth and no scholarship, he is able to rule over others (i.e. he prevails upon them and people respect him) if he has Dharma on his side just like a king who might himself be physically weak or handicapped in body but is righteous and a strict follower of probity and propriety in his dealing with his subjects, has his glory and fame spread throughout the realm, and all sorts

of people obey him and respect him if he is just, kind, compassionate, righteous and noble.

Dharma is indeed an embodiment of Truth; it embodies Truth. That is why those who speak the truth are called righteous and honourable; they are venerated by the society. Such people who are righteous and honourable are therefore called 'truthful followers of Dharma', because they speak the essence of Dharma which is Truth, and nothing but the Truth (14).

[Note--This verse is one of the greatest maxims and axioms taught by the Upanishads—that truthfulness and righteousness are the noblest qualities produced by Brahm in this creation. It is only after the creation of Dharma—the laws of rightful and auspicious behaviour—that Prajapati Brahma, the patriarch of the entire creation, felt fulfilled that his efforts have finally ripened. Prior to this, he wasn't satisfied with what he had created.]

Verse no. 11 establishes that Kshatriyas are superior to even the Brahmins, and verse no. 14 goes on to say that Dharma is superior to even the Kshatriyas as well as the Brahmins. In fact, anyone who has the ceremonial umbrella of Dharma over his head is deemed to be a king amongst his peers whether he is a Kshatriya or not, whether he is a Brahmin, a Vaishya or a Shudra or not. Hence we derive that 'Dharma' is the authority that actually rules over all the other classes in society. Dharma, represented by its quintessential virtue of 'truth', is the overriding virtue that rules over all other virtues in the creation. In fact, Dharma is the supreme authority of this visible creation consisting of the gross world made up of living creatures.]

15. There are four Varnas (division or classes in society). Brahm, who is the primary creator of these four classes, became the 'fire', which is the best and the most potent amongst the basic elements that exist in creation. He became a Brahmin as well as a Kshatriya, a Vaishya as well as a Shudra amongst the humans¹. [See verse nos. 11-14.]

That is why men honour Gods by offering sacrifices or oblations to the Fire God (during a religious ceremony), and they respect and give donations to the Brahmins and employ them for the purpose of pleasing the Gods to invoke their blessings so that their desires can be fulfilled, because these two, i.e. the Fire and Brahmins, are the senior most revelations of Brahm and Brahma respectively².

One must endeavour to learn and become enlightened about one's 'true self' (or about one's conscious Atma or soul). Otherwise, if one dies without this awareness then he has no chance of attaining any auspicious end just like the Vedas go in vain without studying and understanding them with due intelligence and wisdom, or doing any religious exercise fails if not done in a proper way³.

All the good deeds done and their beneficial effects become null and void if a person does not acquire the knowledge about one's true self or about one's own Atma. On the contrary, the good deeds and their righteous effects never decay or diminish for a man who worships and honours his Atma; all his desires and aspirations are fulfilled (15).

[Note--¹That is, amongst the Gods who are invisible, Brahm manifested himself as the Fire God, while amongst their visible counterparts in this world he transformed himself as the Brahmin amongst the humans. In

other words, the Brahmins are to the humans what the Fire is to the Gods. In the entire kingdom of creation represented by uncountable species of living creatures on this earth, the human being is considered the most powerful and the most potential just like the Gods are amongst the celestial creation. And the Brahmin is the most potential amongst the humans just like the Fire is amongst all the Gods.

²Fire is the subtle manifestation of Brahm exhibiting his stupendous energy, potential powers, majesty and force, while the Brahmins represent the same glory of Brahm in his visible manifestation as the senior most and the wisest amongst men in the entire creation. Brahmins are supposed to possess the same potential as that possessed by the fire element. That is why they are employed to perform the fire-sacrifice because they are deemed to be ‘brothers’ of the Fire God. The Gods would listen to their pleadings on behalf of other humans because of the fact that they are related to the Fire God who is the senior God amongst them. The transcendent Lord, Brahm, had initially created Brahma, the patriarch of creation at the very beginning of the process itself, and the latter had created the Brahmins as his offspring. So, these Brahmins represent both the Supreme Being (Brahm) who manifested himself as the all-powerful Fire element, as well as Brahma, the patriarch.

³If one simply learns the Vedas like a parrot without understanding the import of their tenets, they would endlessly chant the hymns without reaping any spiritual benefit from them. It is like a student learning any English essay by heart to pass an examination, but this rote learning will not give him any benefit of reading English in life. Similarly, everything has a proper system to do it, and if things are done in a hurry then they do not give the desired result. In the same fashion, if a man does not spend his time in realising who he actually is, then he may die an ordinary death with a burden of sins upon his conscious. On the other hand, a self-realised man would have vanquished sins while alive, he would have detached himself from all worldly attachments, and calmly exit from this world at the appropriate time without any regrets. This death would give him the ultimate peace that any man yearns for. The man who is ignorant about his true self as his Atma would be indulging in the pursuit of the world, and at the time of death he would be restless and agitated because his mind would be thinking of this world, about his material wealth, about his unfinished tasks, about the so many comforts and pleasures that he has been enjoying till his death and which he would not be enjoying any more. This state of restlessness of this man would be in sharp contrast to the peace of mind of a self-realised man.]

16. This Atma or pure conscious soul (here referring to the supreme authority Brahm who has created this world as described in the previous verses of this Brahmin, and then establishes himself in it as its Atma that controls it from within) gives shelter, refuge, protection and succour to all the creatures. That is, it is the ‘Loka’¹ or the abode or the dwelling place of all the creatures.

When this Atma (which is the true identity of a man) does any religious sacrifice, it becomes a shelter or a dwelling place for the Gods (i.e. the Gods find their succour and sustenance in this exercise undertaken by the Atma because had there been no Atma no one would have offered oblations to the sacred fire from which the Gods derive their food)².

This Atma becomes the Loka of the exalted sages and seers when they study the scriptures (because they find their real destination and goal in life when they study the scriptures which unequivocally establish that the Atma is the only truthful entity in this otherwise deluding world).

When this Atma desires to have an offspring, it becomes the Loka for the householder (because his whole mind and entire thought is concentrated in having an heir, and since this world is a creation of the mind inspired by the desire of the conscious Atma to have an offspring, the man begins to love this 'creation of his', i.e. the world (or Loka) as he would love his own son).

When the Atma offers food to dead ancestors in the form of a 'Pinda' (a rounded ball of cooked cereals offered to dead ancestors), it becomes their shelter (because the latter depend upon the food offered to them by their descendants, and only a living man characterised by having a soul or Atma or 'life' can give this offering, and not a dead body of a man from which the consciousness has left).

Similarly, when it (i.e. the Atma) gives shelter and hope as well as food and nourishment to other humans, it becomes their shelter (because they depend upon a magnanimous, benevolent and generous man who has a 'soul' as compared to a man who is 'soulless' and cruel and even snatches away whatever poor people have).

When this Atma gives water and fodder/grass to animals, or helps them to graze in the fields, it becomes their shelter (obviously because the animals depend upon the man here symbolised by the Atma). Likewise, it is also the shelter for domestic pets such as dogs and cats as well as other creatures as birds or ants³.

That is the reason every creature in this world wants to protect such a wise and self-realised person⁴ even as everyone likes to protect his own body and his own self.

The necessity of doing these noble deeds and meritorious work along with their good effects and the powers they bestow upon the doer of such deeds have been discussed in the context of 'Panch Mahayagya' —or the five great sacrifices⁵ (16).

[Note—¹The word *Loka* literally means the dwelling place or a habitat of a person. For example, we say that Dev-loka is the abode of Gods, and the word here refers to the heavens where the Gods live. Since Brahm took up residence in the creature as its living consciousness present in its bosom as its Atma without which the creature's body wouldn't have been able to show any signs of life whatsoever, and since Brahm is the primary cause and controlling authority that controls them from within, the Atma is regarded as the seat of authority or the centre from where all powers that govern the creature's every movement and action are controlled and directed. Without the Atma the creature would be as good as dead, and therefore the word 'Loka' is a metaphor for this Atma because the latter gives the life its basic foundation and meaning, its relevance and importance. Without it there would be no life in the first place. Hence, *the Atma is the de-facto abode or Loka of the creature where his 'true self' can be found*. In other words, if we wish to meet the creature, we would have to search for it in its Atma.

²Fire sacrifices are done by people who are 'living', i.e. by those people who have an Atma or consciousness in them, and not by dead persons. All activity done by a man needs a conscious effort, and only

religious men perform religious sacrifices to honour the Gods. The offerings are meant for the Gods but the medium is the sacred 'fire' which is a symbol of life and energy represented by the Atma of the creature, and which is in turn a representative of Brahm (see verse no. 6 and 15 above). The Gods obtain their sustenance from this 'fire', and therefore it is like their abode or Loka. Further, the actual entity that offers oblations to this fire is the Atma of the man who performs the sacrifice, because the body of the man is not his true identity but is only a vehicle to carry the Atma which is however his truthful self or identity. Hence, for all practical purposes, it is the Atma that does the fire sacrifice, and not the body of the man. Obviously then it is the Atma which is the cause of the sustenance of the Gods, and therefore it is their Loka or abode from which they get their solace and succour. This argument will apply to all other examples given here.

³A cruel man who has no 'soul' in him, or a person who has no mercy and compassion in him, a person who is cruel and merciless and selfish, would not bother to look after the comfort and well being of other members of the creation. He would have no compunctions in killing them at the slightest pretext. It will be observed in our daily lives that pet dogs are very fond of their doting masters, but when they see any menacing stranger whom they think to be a danger to their safety, they would bark and snap at them instead of wagging their tails. The virtues of compassion, mercy, magnanimity, kindness, graciousness, benevolence and love are the hallmarks of the pure Atma or soul. That is why self-realised 'souls' such as sages and seers, hermits and ascetics etc. are so merciful that animals of the wild forest did not harm them when they lived in forests as part of their last phase of life; instead they roamed around them freely.

⁴Which kind of person would the creatures like to protect? The answer is—that person who performs religious ceremonies to give shelter to the Gods, who studies the scriptures or helps in such studies to support wise and erudite sages and seers in their mission of spreading spiritual awareness, who keeps his dead ancestors satisfied by offering them food, who provides food and shelter to his fellow humans, who takes proper care of animals as well as other lowly creatures, such as cats, dogs, birds, ants, etc. who are dependent upon him and look upon him for their protection and sustenance. In short, every creature would like to ensure that such people are protected and helped because all living beings wish to have someone in their midst who would give them protection and security when needed, who would look after their interests, and who would give them shelter and refuge, solace and succour selflessly.

⁵The five great religious sacrifices or *Panch Mahayagya* are the following—(1) Bhut Yagya (भूत यज्ञ) refers to taking care of other creatures in creation, such as feeding animals and providing for their protection and shelter; (2) Manushya Yagya (मनुष्य यज्ञ) refers to doing the same thing for fellow human beings as done for animals and other creatures of this creation; (3) Pitri Yagya (पितृ यज्ञ) refers to offering oblations to dead ancestors and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls; (4) Dev Yagya (देव यज्ञ) refers to the performance of fire sacrifices in which offerings are given to the sacred fire which sustain the Gods and are done to honour them; and (5) Brahm Yagya (ब्रह्म यज्ञ) refers to the study of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as Brahm. These five sacrifices have been described in Ashramo-panishad, verse no. 3.]

17. In the beginning of the creation, this Atma was all alone. [This fact has been repeatedly asserted in canto no. 1. Refer Brahmin 2, verse no. 1; Brahmin 4, verse nos. 1, 7, 10 and 11.] It¹ desired for a woman (i.e. a wife) and then subjects (offspring) to keep company with and remain involved in. Then it desired that it should have wealth and it should do different deeds. Humans (representing the conscious Atma) generally have these sorts of desires and aspirations², and they never get more than this (resulting in their remaining ever unfulfilled and discontented)³.

Now, if they wish, they can convert this lack of contentment and satisfaction by having the following philosophical view point— ‘let me treat my Mana (mind) as my Atma, my speech as my wife, my Pran (the life sustaining vital winds present in the body) as my children, my eyes as symbolising my worldly assets (because without the eyes, the world becomes dark, gloomy and worthless; no one can see what he possesses without his faculty of sight which uses the eyes to enable a man to see his worldly assets and possessions that give him satisfaction), and my ears as divine and sublime assets (because I can learn about superior topics such as spiritualism, metaphysics, theology, philosophical wisdom, Mantras etc, through hearing of them by my ears; I can hear religious discourses, preaching and teachings of great saints, sayings of the scriptures through my ears). For a person who thinks in this way, his body is metaphorically his ‘deed’ because any deed is done by the body. Therefore, all his sacramental religious needs, such as doing Yagya (fire sacrifices), can be done by these five elements such as his Atma (which is his true self), his speech (which is metaphorically his wife), his Pran (which is metaphorically his children), his eyes (which are metaphorically his worldly assets), and his ears (which are metaphorically his divine assets).

These five elements are present in all the living creatures. Hence, an animal is a ‘Paankta’ (पांकत—someone who has the five basic needs to do a religious sacrifice), a man is a Paankta for the same reason, and similarly all other living creatures are also Paanktas⁴.

That is, this entire creation is a symbolic fire sacrifice involving these five basic elements (of the pure conscious Atma, the faculty of speech, the vital winds called Pran, the eyes symbolising the faculty of sight, and the ears symbolising the faculty of hearing). A person who is wise and sagacious enough to have this knowledge, who can comprehend the broad ramifications of these symbolic representations of divinity, who realises the esoteric and enigmatic meaning of the cosmic sacrifice which is divine, sublime, subtle and hallowed, is able to acquire all the elements he desires as described in this verse (i.e. he gets a good wife, has compatible and obedient children, gets wealth and prosperity, and successfully accomplishes all deeds that he endeavours to do, and consequentially gets renown and glory in this world). He is honoured and praised for his great wisdom and enlightenment; he gets renown and acquires magnificence with this eclectic knowledge (because all people respect wise and learned persons) (17).

[Note--¹The pronoun *it* is used here for Atma in the first sentence because the Atma is the neuter gender; the same Atma is present in everything that exists—whether that entity is a male or a female, whether

it belongs to the human race or the animal kingdom, whether it is a plant or an insect or a worm. So the pronouns 'he' or 'she' are not proper words to use for the Atma. Since the Atma is synonymous with Brahma, it therefore would be proper to use the pronoun 'it' for Brahm also, because Brahm is also a neuter gender. To sight an instance, light which symbolises knowledge is synonym for Brahm, and light is referred to by the pronoun 'it', and neither by the pronouns 'he' or 'she'.

²If a person is indeed wise and enlightened enough to know the truth and reality about Brahm, then why does he get willingly trapped into doing deeds and suffering from its consequences, instead of involving himself in pursuing nobler objectives of self-upliftment and spiritual enhancement by acquiring truthful knowledge and detaching himself from getting involved in doing deeds in this world? The answer lies in the fact that all the Gods who preside over the various sense organs try to swerve the creature away from the Atma and bend him towards the world. The creature is basically divine by nature because every one of them has an Atma and this Atma is fundamentally pure and holy, and it always seeks freedom from the bondage of this body in which it has unfortunately found itself due to its own ignorance. Then what is the reason that the creature has lost its divinity? The answer lies in the different worldly desires, lusts and passions which it has that tear it away from its path of liberation and deliverance, and instead tie it down to this mundane world. This point has been very clearly elucidated in this verse. See also verse no. 10 in this context.

³This stanza stresses that desire, aspirations, volitions and hopes can never be completely realised or fulfilled. If one tries to find happiness, peace, bliss and contentment in the hope that he will get them if such and such task is successfully done, then he is living in a fool's paradise. The real contentment, peace, happiness and bliss come when greed for seeking happiness and peace in the external world ceases completely; real contentment comes from seeking it internally and having a broad view of things rather than being short sighted and having a myopic view of the cosmos through the lens self-interest and a biased intellect.

⁴That is, given the will and the right level of wisdom, each creature can perform a holy sacrifice without going through the elaborate rituals, because the basic and primary requirements for doing any religious deed is present in all living creatures who have a body. It should be noted here that even the Atma that has got the body of an animal due to its past deeds can hope to have enlightenment and do religious deeds that are auspicious and provider of liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death in which the Atma has been trapped based upon the deeds done by it in a particular life if that Atma gets the right environment that is conducive to spiritual upliftment. It might be asked how an animal can do this? The answer lies in the fact that if the household in which this animal lives has a religious environment and religious discourses are held in it, if the scriptures are recited aloud and if the holy name of the Lord is chanted, the Atma living in the body of that animal would get the same benefit as that got by the human members of that household. On the contrary, if the humans living there have their minds diverted elsewhere even while apparently listening to religious recitations, then it is as good as their not being there at all; or if their mind is thinking of some unrighteous thoughts while their lips are reciting holy Mantras, then they are simply cheating themselves as well as others.]

Canto 1/Brahmin 5

[This Brahmin or section of the Upanishad describes the creation of food that would sustain and nourish the creation created by the supreme father, Prajapati Brahma. It goes on to describe the importance of Mana (mind, its thoughts and emotions), Vaani (speech), and Pran (the vital life sustaining forces present in the body; breath or the vital airs.)]

1. The supreme father, i.e. Prajapati Brahma, created seven categories of food by the good effects of, or as an auspicious result of his doing severe Tapa (penances) accompanied by pertinent Gyan (knowledge or science of how to go about the whole process)¹.

He distributed the seven types of food created by him as follows—one kind of food was meant for all the creatures, two kinds were kept aside for the Gods, three kinds were kept by him for his own use, and one was distributed among all the animals.

All the creatures who breathe as well as those who do not breathe were made to share in the food set aside for the members of the animal kingdom². These categories or classes of food are being constantly consumed by them, yet their supply never diminishes. What is the reason? A person who realises the hidden meaning and subtle implication of this statement about the distribution of food and its inexhaustible supply, the fact that everyone who is created by the creator will be taken care of by him and get his share according to his needs and no one would be allowed to starve by the creator for the want of it, is able to enjoy food on a perpetual basis, without any shortage of it. When such a wise man eats food by the medium of his mouth he is actually offering oblations to the different Gods symbolically residing inside his body, because the food eaten by the mouth is used by the entire body evenly and all the organs derive equal nourishment from this food³.

A wise, erudite and self-realised person gets full satisfaction and mental peace that he would not have to die for want of food, or starve for it. In other words, he attains Amrit or the ambrosia of eternity and peace (1).

[Note—¹Once Prajapati created the subjects of his kingdom, he needed to feed them. In order to feed them, food was needed. And in order to create food, he had to make sincere and hard efforts, which means he had to do severe 'Tapa', and he needed to apply relevant technology, or knowledge called Gyan, to bring about the actual production of food. With the relevant knowledge and effort he produced seven primary types of food items.

²The food set aside for the lower rung of creatures such as animals was meant for the consumption of both the creatures of the botanical as well as the zoological kingdoms. The humans were to consume the first type of food set aside in the first instance. The process of breathing referred here is when one breathes using the lungs like done by a large number of animals, birds, reptiles and certain fishes as well as other evolutionary developed members of the zoological kingdom such as humans. Those who breathe without inhaling and exhaling fresh air like

we humans do, and even like so many animals and birds do, such as for example those creatures belonging to the lower rung of the evolutionary ladder, e.g. bacteria, viruses, marine creatures, amoeba, insects and worms etc. are included in the second category of those creatures who do not breathe. Even the members of the plant kingdom come under this latter category, for no plant ever breathes like we humans do in the normal course of our lives. They do take in oxygen and give out carbon dioxide, but they have a different process for it.

³A wise man realises that the food is created by the creator for the sustenance of his creation and not for indulgence. The different Gods are present symbolically inside the body and they represent the different vital functions that the body carries out through the sense organs of the man; these Gods are metaphors for the vital forces of Nature that govern the functioning of the entire creation, and since the man's body is the cosmos in microcosm, these Gods of the creation are present in his body in a micro form. When a man eats food with the intention of offering oblations to these divine forces of creation represented by the Gods present in his own body, then each morsel eaten by him becomes equivalent to one offering into the sacred fire of the religious sacrifice. Anything done with righteous and auspicious intentions and any deed done as an offering to the supreme Lord become holy and divine. Since the Gods represent the supreme forces of Nature and they in turn represent the supreme transcendental authority known as the Brahm, when they are fed by the food eaten by the man who is wise and erudite, they get enhanced and nourished by these offerings, and thus they ensure that the food supply never gets diminished. Why is it said that the man should be 'wise and erudite'? It is because only a wise and erudite man would know that what he is eating is not meant to satisfy his taste buds or his hunger, or the food in this world is not meant to be indulged into, but should be considered as an offering to the Gods and that each morsel eaten is equivalent to an offering to the sacred fire lit during a religious sacrifice. So the morsels of food that he eats keep the divine fire of creation perpetually burning by keeping the forces of Nature satisfied and well provided for.

It is like the case when the fire of a fire-pit is perpetually kept burning by constantly replenishing the supply of fuel such as oil or firewood. The Gods representing the powerful forces of Nature are perpetually kept satisfied by the food offerings eaten by a wise man, and they in turn ensure that the supply does never exhaust.

There is another reason for the inexhaustible supply of food. Brahm is eternal, imperishable and inexhaustible. So when the wise man eats food to sustain his body which is the habitat of the different Gods representing the different functions of this supreme Brahm, or who are the different manifestations of this Brahm, he is actually nourishing that supreme Brahm himself. Now, this Brahm is his pure conscious self or his Atma, and this Atma in turn is the same in all the living creatures. Therefore symbolically he is nourishing the primary forces of Nature as well as the principal authority known as Brahm by the food he eats. Even as an ordinary king never lets a person who serves him go hungry if that king has a full granary, the supreme King of this creation, i.e. Brahm, the supreme Lord, in his role as the creator known as Brahma, would surely ensure that his wise subjects are well fed.

This verse has great significance as it indicates that the basic necessities of life are well provided for by the supreme creator, and it is the insatiable greed in the creature that causes all shortages.]

2. The seven types of food were produced by the father of creation by doing

Tapa or hard labour and diligent effort, accompanied by proper Gyan or technical know-how (as described in verse no. 1). Out of those, one is of the general category. [It is produced from earth, such as the different cereals, pulses, vegetables, tubers and edible roots etc.] Everyone, all the creatures, have a share in it; hence everyone should share this type of food equally amongst themselves. A person who selfishly uses this type or category of food, which is meant for the consumption of all the living creatures, just for his own self, can never free himself from having committed a grave sin, for he is virtually usurping that which belongs to others; he is starving his brethrens of their rightful sustenance and nourishment.

Out of the next two food categories said to be reserved for the Gods, one was 'Hooth' (the food offered directly to Gods through the offerings made in the sacred fire during fire sacrifices and other religious ceremonies), and the other was 'Prahooth' (that food which is offered as Prasad or as previously sanctified food offerings made to the Gods during religious worship). Some scholars call it 'Darsh' and 'Purnamash' respectively¹. Since the various religious sacrifices (called Yagya) are meant for the Gods, and since they are meant for offering the share of the food created by Prajapati for the Gods to them, they should not be done to fulfill one's own worldly desires, or the offerings to the sacred fire should not be offered with some vested personal interests. The fire sacrifices as well as the offerings of food to the Gods should be done in a selfless manner, without any expectations of any return for them.

The third type of food meant for the animals is symbolised by milk. Both the animals and the humans consume this food².

A newly born infant is made to lick clarified butter (called ghee) or is breast fed. Even a newly born calf does not eat grass by grazing in the meadows; it rather suckles milk from the udder of its mother, the cow. All the creatures find sustenance and nourishment in milk, whether they are those who breathe through the lung and nose, or not.

Those who say that a person who does fire sacrifices (or other religious rituals or ceremonies) by using milk as an offering to the sacred fire (or the deity) for one full year gets immortality, are erroneous in their understanding, because the day, even the very first day, when milk is offered as an offering or oblation to the Gods, such a man gets victory over death and he does not have to wait for the entire year. Such a wise and enlightened person is deemed to be offering the various Gods the food that is meant for them.

Now the question arises, why does the food never diminish inspite of it being regularly consumed by so many countless consumers? The answer is that the wise and self-realised man (who selflessly offers food to others) becomes virtually imperishable³. From the practical perspective, such a man lives a long working life so that he can grow more and better food⁴. He and his progeny use hard work and intelligence along with technical knowledge and skill to keep on generating more and more food. If the human race loses its ability to work hard and have intelligence,

wisdom and knowledge, then it is sure that, by and by, the production of food will decline and finally stop one day. This would have catastrophic consequences for the entire creation.

The food is taken in through the mouth and that is why it satisfies all the Gods (i.e. its benefits are received by all the Gods representing the different sense organs of the body, because the food eaten through the mouth is used by the entire body; see also canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse nos. 17-19 and Brahmin 4, verse no. 6 in this context). This food provides the fundamental basis for creation and acts as its bulwark because the energy of food eaten provides the necessary impetus, vitality and stamina that keep the wheel of creation turning perpetually. In other words, the food is like Amrit or the ambrosia that provides immortality to the creation (i.e. it provides the nourishment needed for a healthy body of the creature which lives long, works hard, and reproduces the next generation of creation in its own likeness so that the chain of creation continues). This is the miracle, majesty and glory of the quintessential factor of life, called 'food', in creation (2).

[Note :- ¹The word *Darsh* means sacrifice performed in the new moon day or the day following the dark moon night, while *Purnamash* refers to the sacrifice performed on the full moon day. Since religious sacrifices in ancient times were done according to the lunar calendar, these two days were considered the most auspicious ones because the first day symbolises the beginning of the creation and the gradual enhancement of the glory, virtues and potentials of the person who does the fire sacrifice even as the shine, glory and beauty of the disc of the moon goes on increasing day by day during the first half of the lunar month. This gradual enhancement of the glory of the moon continues until the full moon day when it is at its pinnacle of glory and majesty, and this latter full disk of the moon symbolises accomplishment of all glories and virtues by the spiritual seeker or aspirant. Therefore, the fire sacrifice done at the beginning of the lunar month symbolises the beginning of the process of evolution and the sincere resolve of the aspirant to gradually enhance his authority, majesty, virtues, glories, powers and potentials, while the one done on the full moon day marks the culmination of his successful spiritual journey and fulfillment of all his desires.

²The food eaten by mammals is converted into *milk* which is the basic food for this category of creatures, and humans fall under this category. When a child is born, it is nourished by milk, and this milk is regarded as complete food for this category of creatures. Now, this word 'milk' is a metaphor for all wholesome liquids that supply nourishment to the creature and have life sustaining qualities, and that includes water. This is why both men and animals not only drink milk but cannot survive without water.

³How does a man *conquer death* and become immortal? A wise man offers the best he has to the Gods who represent the immortal factors of creation. At the time of the beginning of creation, the Viraat Purush or the self created Brahma had wished to create and he had done a symbolic fire sacrifice wherein he had offered his own self as an offering. Since there was nothing at the beginning, he had to offer himself. When the creation came into being, this Viraat manifested himself as the human being. So a wise man symbolically offers himself to the Gods and thereby becomes one like them, i.e. he becomes immortal. No wonder in it because wisdom makes a man illustrious and enlightened, and this

entails that he has realised his true self which is indeed eternal and imperishable as the pure conscious Atma.

⁴A wise man is self controlled which implies that he never over eats or indulges in eating junk food for the sake of its taste. This ensures that he has a comparatively healthy body and can lead a long and productive life. Besides this, the human race is considered 'imperishable' because it can perpetuate itself indefinitely by reproducing, because it is strong, powerful and potent as compared to other creatures, because it is the ruler of this creation who manages to subjugate the rest of the creatures who could offer competition to him, because it has the wherewithal for a long life in the form of medicines and other modern tools, and because it is hardworking and the most intelligent amongst the entire creation of Prajapati Brahma.]

3. [Verse no. 1 says that Prajapati kept three parts or categories of food for himself, i.e. for his own use or for his own Atma. The following verses describe how those three parts are superior to other forms of food.]

Prajapati selected three foods for himself. These three are symbolically represented by the Mana (mind), the Vaani (spoken words; the faculty of speech), and the Pran (the vital winds or forces that sustain life).

The focused Mana or mind is at the center of successful completion of all tasks. If the mind is diverted elsewhere or distracted by something, if all the faculties of the mind are not working in tandem and in a coordinated way, we would not see or hear anything in a cogent and a comprehensive manner. That is why it is usually said—'My mind was engaged somewhere else so I could not see a particular thing properly; therefore I cannot remember what I saw', or 'my mind was not here so I could not hear what you said'. That is, it is clear that the mind is the one who actually sees or hears anything for the creature, and not the sense organs that are used by the creature to see or hear, such as the eye or the ear respectively. These organs simply act as a medium for the mind on behalf of the creature to receive data, information and impulses from the outside world, but the actual process of perception is carried on in the brain, through its various faculties associated with different organs of perception and action present in the body.

Kaam (worldly lust, desire and passion), Sankalp (resolve, determination, volition etc.) Sanshaya (doubts and confusions), Shradha and Ashradha (belief, faith, conviction, reverence and devotion for anything or anyone, as well as the lack of them respectively), Dhriti and Adhriti (steadfastness, firmness, resolutions, or the lack of these virtues respectively), Hrim or Lajja (shame, self respect, dignity etc.), Buddhi (intelligence, wisdom, erudition, discrimination etc.), and Bhaye (fears, consternations, perplexities, horrors etc.) —all of them have their existence due to the presence of the mind. They are there because the mind thinks that these traits, perceptions or concepts exist; otherwise they have no actual existence.

That is why also, when a man's back is touched, he becomes aware that he is being touched by someone because of the existence of the perception of touch in the mind, though he is unable to actually see, hear or know who has touched him. [If the mind ceases to function, or if the mind is diverted somewhere else, or if the mind does not pay attention to

the sense of someone touching a person's back, that person would never know or remember at all that he had been ever touched on his back by someone.]

Words are manifestation of the power of speech; they are the medium of the faculty of speech which enables a person to express or voice all his feelings and emotions, all his intentions and thoughts. The words, through the medium of speech, are a medium by which the person expresses or voices what is in his heart and mind.

There are five vital winds/airs present in the body, and they are collectively called 'Panch Pran'. These are the following—Pran (breath), Apaana (the wind that passes down the intestine), Udaana (the wind which moves up), Vyana (the wind which maintains equilibrium), and Samana (which regulates circulation and even distribution of food). It is upon these five vital winds/airs that the Atma, which is the truthful identity of the creature and which is pure consciousness and the 'true self', relies upon to stay inside the body of the creature (3).

[Note--Verse no. 2 has already stated that the food offered to the Gods as Hoot and Prahoot gives benefit only when they are offered to them selflessly. The Atma is the personification or a representative of the supreme Brahm, and the mind, the speech and the Pran are the three elements through which this Atma expresses itself. These are used by it to carry on its functions, and their proper functioning keeps it contented, well nourished and healthy. These three, i.e. the Mana, the Vaani and the Pran, are therefore the symbolic *foods* meant for the sustenance of the Atma inside the body, because the Atma cannot properly function without them, and they together provide the Atma a means for its effective existence. Therefore, a man must not use them for his own selfish and vested interests because they do not belong to him, they are not meant for his own use, but instead they are meant for the supreme Brahm in the form of the Atma.]

That is, a wise person does not use his mind, his speech and his life to pursue this artificial material world of delusions and entrapments; he does not indulge in self gratification and pursuing of the materialistic comforts and pleasures of the world; he does not allow his mind to think of the world and its perishable and impermanent pleasures; he does not allow his speech to talk about worthless worldly things; he does not allow his vital winds/airs to waste their energy away in futile chatter and pursuit of the world, in doing useless exercises that do not nourish and contribute to the well being and the enhancement of the stature of his Atma.]

4. These three—the Mana (mind), Vaani (speech), and Pran (vital winds/airs)—are metaphors for the three worlds, called the Trilokas. The faculty of speech, i.e. the Vaani, represents the earth (and that is why, all work is accomplished on this earth by the use of words and voice as in making a speech or speaking to someone. Imagine a world full of dumb people where no one can speak!)

Mana (mind) represents the next world, called the Antariksha, which is the sky above the earth and up to the edge of the solar system (and that is why the mind has a tendency to swiftly fly from one place to another, and it wanders here and there like the creatures who live in the

sky—such as the birds and flies; the mind can go anywhere without any hindrance because the sky creates no obstacles in its path).

Finally, the Pran (the vital winds/airs) represents the third world known as the Duloka, or the heaven which is the inter galactic space beyond the solar system (and that is why the cosmic wind occupies all that space which is not occupied by anything else such as the planets, stars, asteroids etc in the universe) (4).

5. They (the mind, speech and wind/air) also represent the three Vedas. The speech represents the Rig Veda, the mind represents the Yajur Veda, and the Pran represent the Sam Veda (5).

[Note--This is symbolic of the fact that the *Rig Veda* is a compendium of the first articulately spoken words that were intelligently and systematically composed by Prajapati Brahma in the beginning of creation, and it was primarily ritualistic in nature. The *Yajur Veda* required the mind because it had philosophy and metaphysics at its core besides the fact that it described the elaborate process involved in the sacrificial exercise. And the *Sam Veda* represents Pran because it requires the powers of breath in order to enable the aspirant to sing its verses melodiously as is evident from the rendering of classical songs which involve the ability to control the breath for extended periods of time to produce prolonged notes of sound. For singing properly one needs a good and sweet voice (Vaani) as well as its coordination with breath (Pran), because they together produce different tones and tunes from the throat and mouth which are collectively called a song. These organs—the throat and the mouth—are also used by a person to speak. Therefore, singing and good speaking are simply two aspects of the same coin; that is, they represent the incantation of the Sam Veda. See also canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse nos. 22-23.]

6. These three (the mind, speech and Pran) are symbolic of the Gods, the dead ancestors, and the humans. The power of speech represents the Gods, the mind represents the spirits of dead ancestors called Pittars, and the Pran represents the humans known as Manushya (6).

[Note--Speech comes from the mouth where the most exalted vital wind/air, the Pran, which is the senior most amongst the Gods, lives — see canto one Brahmin 3, verse nos. 20, 21, 24. Hence, speech represents *Gods*.

The mind wonders rapidly from one place to another like the spirit of dead ancestors or *Pittars* who roam about freely in space and can move from one place to another very swiftly in a fraction of a second. They appear and disappear very swiftly, almost like a ghost. This is the reason why the mind is so fickle and transient.

The Pran, which is the life sustaining wind/air element, is obviously a metaphor for a living man, the *Manushya*, for no man can ever hope to live without the presence of breath inside his body, along with the presence of other vital winds/airs which together help in sustaining his life.]

7. Again, these three (the mind, speech and Pran) are like a father, a mother and their children. The faculty of speech is like a mother, the mind is like the father, and the Pran is like the offspring (7).

[Note--When anyone feels hungry or thirsty, he 'asks' for food or drink. Hence, the faculty of speech takes care of his needs, and is therefore like a caring and loving mother who feeds her baby when the child 'cries' for food. Also, when a man is in pain, he 'wails'; when he feels happy, he exults and 'exclaims'. Any kind of expression needs a voice. A child feels so happy and carefree in the presence of its mother; he weeps in front of her and laughs heartily in the presence of its mother. Hence, speech is like a *mother*. A man uses his faculty of speech to tell others what he needs, when he is in pain and when he is happy, how he feels and what he wants from others just like a child is more comfortable at asking for anything from its mother as compared to its father.

The mind is intelligent, discriminating and wise; it is not sentimental and emotional like the mother. The mind guides the man in a balanced manner, and prepares him to face the world. The mind helps the man to create wealth, take care of his education, business, vocation and livelihood. It helps him to plan and execute. It is analytical and logical. Hence, it is like a *father* who prepares the child to face the world by providing him with education, guiding him through his business, and inculcating in him special skills to face the world.

The winds are five in number, and they take care of the different functions of the body—viz. the Pran keeps it alive, the Apaan helps in digestion of food and excretion of waste products from the body, the Udaan helps in keeping the body upright and in expelling mucous and other waste gases through the lungs and the mouth, the Vyan maintains body pressure, and the Samaan helps in equal distribution of food and nourishment to all the tissues of the body uniformly through the circulation system. Hence the different Prans are like the subjects of the kingdom who take care of the nitty-gritty of existence on behalf of their Lord, the supreme Brahm represented by the Atma in this case. Therefore, these Prans are like the *offspring* of the Atma.

The link between the mind and speech has also been described in canto 1, Brahmin 2, verse no. 4, wherein it is stated that Prajapati created Mana and Vaak, and their union created Samwatsar (or a fixed span of time), symbolising mortality and something that is finite as opposed to immortality or infinity. In other words, everything created by Prajapati using his mind and speech have a fixed life span; they are mortal and would come to an end one day as opposed to the Atma which represents the supreme, transcendental Brahm who is eternal and infinite]

8. They (the mind, speech and Pran) are Vigyaat (विज्ञात—that which is known), Vigigyaas (विजिज्ञास्य—that which is worth knowing), and Avigyaat (अविज्ञात—that which is not known). The first (Vigyaat—that which is known knowledge) is a metaphor for speech because one speaks of things one knows about; one cannot speak of things that are not known to him. The faculty of speech protects its knower, i.e. the wise Atma, by the virtue of possessing knowledge¹ (8).

[Note--¹For example, when a man faces some obstacles, say an animal standing in his way, the faculty of speech makes relevant sounds to remove that obstacle from his way, and it thereby protects the man from getting injured by that animal and helps him to move ahead. Another example of how the faculty of speech protects the knower is when a person is warned of impending danger by someone who knows about it before hand.]

9. Whatever there is ‘worth knowing’ (Vijigyaat) is a revelation of the Mana (mind). Actually, it is the mind that is worth researching about, worth knowing about and worthy of understanding because all doubts and confusions about even established truths arise in the mind and not in either the speech or the Pran). By becoming ‘worthy of being known or understood’, it protects the Atma (9).

[Note—The mind or *Mana* is the only intelligent component of the body, or it is the only intelligent instrument that the Atma uses to remove any doubts as well as to understand whatever information the Atma receives from the outside world. It is a complex instrument however, because it creates doubts and confusions even in things which are actual facts and irrefutable truths, and then endeavours to remove them itself. As any educated man in a modern world knows, the various sciences are meant to unravel the secrets of the functioning of the various complex things which we take for granted in our lives. For example, we try to learn how the computer works, or how a complex chemical formula is formulated, or how a certain machine works, or how the various parts of the body function, etc. Once we know about the basic principles behind their working, we are better equipped to handle them. Likewise, when we learn about the mind, we are better able to control it from the metaphysical perspective.

For instance, when a person becomes wise in the sense that he has understood the functioning of the mind, he realises the fact that the world, which he had been earlier treating as real and endearing because it was his deluded mind that had told him it was so, is actually false, deluding, artificial and misleading. He wouldn’t have realised this if he had not studied the functioning of the mind from the metaphysical perspective. Once he becomes aware of the fact that he should not unduly and blindly rely upon the mind, except with caution and discrimination, he would indeed become wise and enlightened, because then he would first endeavour to control the principal secretary of his, i.e. his mind, in order to attain higher stature for his self or his Atma. Though the mind is indispensable for the Atma as much as a secretary, who is otherwise very competent except for some freakish traits in him, is for his boss, the Atma or the boss should nevertheless be on his guard while dealing with such a subordinate.

Once enlightened about the truth, the Atma or the true self of the man would become disenchanted from the world of artificiality and delusions, and then it would not waste its time anymore in pursuing it, but instead divert its energy towards spiritual pursuits and self improvement.

Another example to show the importance of researching or learning about the mind is when we say that we must find out what a person ‘actually’ wants in order to remove all doubts in our minds about his actual needs and real intentions. This knowledge helps us to provide precisely what he actually needs or wants, instead of going by his words by which he might not have been able to express himself properly. For instance, when we speak in a foreign tongue or when a person says things which have a double meaning, it is of paramount importance to find out what is in his mind.

It happens often that we attend classes or study books for hours on end but fail to score, then it becomes imperative to find out what is wrong with the ‘mind’ or the Mana, because it might happen that it was not concentrating on the subject being taught in the class, or the book

being read. This clearly shows the importance of learning about the mind and its functioning.

Another instance to emphasise the importance of learning about the mind is when we hear a person speaking something which is sweet and pleasant to hear but he might be deceitful in his heart and have the intention of misleading or cheating us. In this case, the wise mind protects the person by alerting him about the evil designs of the sweet-talking man.

When a man is hungry, the ‘mind’ tells that he needs food, or when he is sick, the mind tells us what medicine he needs. If we provide him with the necessary food or medicine, we are protecting his Atma by the way of protecting his life. Without the presence of mind, the man would have faced grave danger to his life. If a man dies for want a food and medicine as in this example, it would be tantamount to killing his Atma because the Atma only resides inside the body of a living man.

The mind also helps to protect our own lives or interests if we are able to learn from the experience of other people, and also share the knowledge that we have. For this, the mind is needed.

That is why the *Mana* or the mind is a factor which is worthy of knowledge and understanding. This is tantamount to the mind protecting the Atma of the knower, because this Atma is the true ‘self’ or the true identity of the knower.]

10. All that which is ‘not known’ (Avigyat) is a form of Pran because it protects the body even though it remains concealed or hidden from view (10).

[Note--For example, no one can physically see the wind or air element present inside the body, but it is an established fact that without the wind/air element the body cannot live. The Pran is the most important of the vital winds/airs; no one can actually see, feel or hear the Pran, but nevertheless it is vital for a creature’s existence. Since this ‘not known’ entity is vital for sustenance of life, it is a metaphor for *Pran* which is the vital life sustaining force in creation. We cannot, or don’t, know it, but it is nevertheless there.]

11. The faculty of speech has its gross revelation in the form of the ‘earth’, and its radiant and glorious form is manifested as the ‘fire’. The strength and prowess of speech is equally revealed as the earth as well as the fire (i.e. both showcase the stupendous potentials, vitality and powers that speech possesses) (11).

[Note—It is on the planet earth only that living beings who can speak are to be found. Hence the *earth* is the abode or the body where such creatures who speak live. It is like the pure conscious soul or the Atma living in the gross body which is its habitat. Words have the potential of *fire* because speech can ignite emotions that can cause immense events to happen. It can even rouse dormant energy of knowledge in a creature as it happens when a man hears some wise man speak, and he then changes for ever. It is through speech that great leaders have led their people and great revolutions ignited amongst the masses. The latent fire element present in speech can lead to wars, and it can even bring two warring factions to terms because fire is used to weld together two separate pieces of iron. See also verse no. 18 of this Brahmin in this context, as well as verse nos. 4 and 18 of Brahmin 5, verse no. 17 of Brahmin 4,

verse no. 21, 27 of Brahmin 3, and verse no. 2 of Brahmin 2 in this context.]

12. The Duloka (the heavens) is the body of the Mana (mind), while the Aditya (Sun) is its glorious, brilliant, dazzling, splendid and radiant manifestation. The endless and fathomless dimensions of the Duloka and the brilliant luminosity of the Sun are similar to that of the Mana. [In other words, the Mana has these characteristics of being vast and endless as well as brilliant and enlightening.]

It is due to the union of those two brilliant and splendid entities (i.e. the 'fire' of the earth representing speech, and the 'brilliant glory' of the sun representing the mind) that the Pran element has emerged. [That is, Pran, which is the vital life giving and sustaining spark present in the otherwise lifeless body of a creature, possesses the essential virtues which are the hallmarks of both the fire and the sun.]

Pran is also called Indra (who is the king of Gods; it is a metaphor for Pran's superiority over all other essential elements of creation) as well as Ajaayat (the one who is invincible, or the one who has no enemy). An enemy is one who is a competitor, or one who is a rival or an opponent of anybody. A person who is wisened to these facts does not have an enemy¹ (12).

[Note--¹Why does he not have an enemy? It is because a wise person has risen above the mundane considerations of 'mine' and 'your', and treats the entire creation equally, with equanimity. His mind has developed a broad outlook; he is not selfish and self-centered; he is wise and intelligent. His perspectives are broad and sweeping as the outstretched reaches of the sky, and his erudition and wisdom match the glory of the sun. He knows that his Pran is glorious like the sun and incorruptible like the fire. The Pran is the real essence that is to be sought after in the world; it's like the extract (the nectar, the essence) of the flower representing this world. That extract or essence is already with him, so why should he fight for other worthless things in this world. Further, the wise man thinks that the Atma residing in his bosom is the same as that residing in the other person. This means that the other person is his brother and at par with him. So why should he be jealous of him and why should he treat him as his enemy; can anyone treat his own image as his enemy? See also verse no. 19 of this Brahmin below. Also refer Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 2; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 12 and Canto 5, Brahmin 5, verse no. 2-3 in this context.]

13. Water is the body of that Pran, while the Moon represents its glories, its divine illumination as well as its soothing virtues. Both the water and the moon have the same dimension, the same measure, the same quality, the same extent, the same magnitude and the same amount of importance and significance as the Pran¹.

All of these three entities, i.e. the Vaak (the faculty of speech), the Mana (mind) and the Pran (the vital winds/airs that sustain life in the body) are equally important and significant. In other words, these three entities are inseparable from one another and equivalent to each other as far as their metaphysical importance and significance is concerned².

Those who think that these three entities have an end or that they have a fixed term or dimension, such people are able to have sway over

such realms that have a fixed dimension and come to an end. On the other hand, those who are wise enough to realise that these entities are eternal and infinite, having no dimension that can be measured or ascertained, such people are able to acquire sway over those realms that have similar qualities³ (13).

[Note--¹The water and the moon are cool, life sustaining and soothing by nature as opposed to the fire and the sun which are inherently scorching by nature. Both these verse nos. 12 and 13 complement each other. Read together they mean that the primary force that creates, sustains and finally even concludes or ends life in this world has, on the one hand, the stupendous and fiery force represented by the Fire element and the Sun, the vigour, the vitality, the energy, the go-get-do entrepreneurial spirit of these entities, and on the other hand it has the virtues of being soothing, calm and tranquil as the Moon and the coolness and life-sustaining virtues of the Water element.

We must note that earlier it has been said that the fire element is concealed subtly in the water element; it is simple to understand this fact. The fire element is a metaphor for the vital spark of life, and it represents the 'warmth' quality of water that is absolutely necessary for life to be sustained and harboured. Water harbours and protects life, while fire burns everything living to ashes—both these are obviously opposite factors, but it must be understood that without the vital 'spark' and 'warmth' of fire latently present in the water, no life can either be borne or sustained in this world by it. That is why, in frigid cold conditions, all life comes to a standstill, and whatever traces of life that exists in such harsh conditions is in a hibernating state. The depth of the ocean is warm, and it sustains an entire marine ecosystem. On the other hand, very few signs of active life are visible on icy glaciers. It has also been observed that there are hot water springs on earth, indicating the presence of fire element in water. So the fire is intrinsic to water in order to make the water sustain life.

Further, it is to be observed that the fire also has the 'cool' qualities of water in it, as is evident when the fiercely burning fire 'cools' down. On a hot summer day, if one drinks a 'hot' cup of tea his thirst is quenched and not stoked, showing that 'hotness' of tea had a 'cooling' effect on the body.

So the creator struck an equilibrium between these two elements in creation. He empowered the Pran with the potentials of the fire and the water represented by the Sun God and the Moon God respectively. Even as the moon shines because of the light emanating from the sun, the water acquires its life sustaining properties because of the fire element latently present and inherent in it. Similarly, the fire element cannot scorch the creation to cinders because of the quality of coolness present in water. These two—the 'fire' and the 'water'—are both simultaneously present in the 'earth' element which forms the physical gross body of the creature.

Likewise, the Sun is very vital for sustaining life on this planet because without sun's light, there would be no photosynthesis and as a result the entire plant kingdom would be wiped out. The sunlight and sun's energy are very important for all types of creatures, as is evident from the fact that life forms known as dinosaurs had vanished from the surface of the earth when the sky was covered with a dense cloud of dust when a meteor hit the earth millions of years ago, preventing the sunlight from reaching the earth. Similarly, the Moon has the vital role to play

during the night because it provides the soothing coldness to the earth that has been subjected to the heat of the sun during the day time. The moon is known to effect tides in the ocean which was of great importance to ships setting sail for distant lands for trade or coming in to harbour. Certain flowers and plants ripen during the night under the moonlight only.

²Any living creature needs all these three entities to survive in this world. They hold equal importance for it. From the metaphysical point of view, the speech represents the terrestrial world or the earth because the latter is the abode or body of speech—see verse no. 11. Similarly, the mind represents the sky because the latter represents its true character—see verse no.12. The union between these two, i.e. the speech and the mind, created the Pran, the vital wind/air that keeps the body alive and active—see verse no. 12. Without the synchronized working of these three units, the creature cannot live comfortably.

A creature needs the Vaak or the voice to interact with others and earth to stay upon. It needs the Mana or the mind to think and the space to grow and develop. And it needs the Pran or the vital wind/air to breathe and carry out the various functions of the body such as excretion, to get up and move, to evenly distribute nourishment to all the organs, to keep balance etc. These three work harmoniously to enable the Atma to live comfortably and meaningfully in the body.

³The body of the creature which harbours these three entities, i.e. in which the Vaak, the Mana and the Pran live, comes to an end when the creature dies. So the creature that erroneously thinks that the body is its 'self' and adores it as such has a limited knowledge, and so his fame and glory is also limited. On the contrary, a wise and erudite man who realises that the 'self' is not the body, but is the Atma which is eternal and imperishable, is able to acquire fame and glory that are in consonant with this wisdom. He becomes renowned for his enlightened views vis-à-vis the world and its illusions.]

14. That Prajapati who is being described here is also known as 'Samvatsar'¹. This Samvatsar has sixteen Kalaas.

That Prajapati (called the Samvatsar and represented by the moon) gradually changes his shape and form over time which is symbolised by the fifteen nights of the moon's waxing phase when its disc grows from a crescent shape to a fully brightly lit disc of the full moon night, as well as its waning phase represented by the gradually fading disc until it vanishes from sight on the dark moon night². It literally takes fifteen nights to show its fifteen Kalaas or qualities.

The sixteenth Kalaa³ is called 'Dhruv' which means that state which is stable and steady, which does not change and waver.

Therefore, one should not kill or commit any physical violence during the dark moon night. Even for offering sacrifices to the Gods, no creature, even a garden lizard should be killed during this period (because by killing or harming any creature, the man is causing harm to its Pran that is hidden inside the body of that creature, and the patron God of Pran, the Moon God, is watching from the heaven though his face is not visible because of the dark moon's night, and he would surely punish the offender for his heinous crime; the offender should not think that since the Moon is not visible it is not watching)⁴ (14).

[Note--¹Which *Prajapati* or the Lord of his subjects is being referred to here? That *Prajapati* who lives as the 'life' of the creature in the form of its *Pran* as described in verse no. 13 above. This *Prajapati* has the Moon as its apparent form. That is why we talk about the various phases of the moon called its *Kalaas* in this verse. Again, *Samvatsar* literally means a period of one year; it is synonymous with 'Kaal' or the factor that determines the fixed time or tenure after which the entity ceases to exist; it is a metaphor for that which has a limited span of life. This word has been elaborated upon in canto 1, *Brahmin* 2, verse no. 4. Since the *Prajapati* in the form of the moon representing the *Pran* has a fixed life span in this dark world because one day the creature has to die, the various *Kalaas* of the moon refer to the different phases in the life of the creature. The *Pran* is the vital wind/air element which leaves the body at the time of its death to merge with the primary wind or air element in the creation. This represents the sixteenth *Kalaa* which is said to be steady and sure, because the wind/air element in the far reaches of the cosmos is calm and unwaveringly steady as well as eternal, infinite and omnipresent. Therefore, the word *Samvatsar* refers to the fixed life span of a creature.

The significance of the word *Samvatsar* used here in the context of *Prajapati* and his sixteen *Kalaas* is that it implies that whatever is visible in this world—like the moon in this example—will perpetually change and finally come to an end one day. In other words, everything that has been created and would come to an end, including the creator *Prajapati* himself, has a fixed life span symbolised by the word *Samvatsar*, which literally means 'one year'. The word 'one' symbolises completion of one cycle of birth and death. That which is not visible, that which is not apparent, is eternal like the invisible part of the moon as well as its completely dark disk on the sixteenth night is the 'true' nature or face of the creature, and it is the God called *Brahm*. The moon 'is' there in the dark night also, but no one can see it. Because no one can see the dark disc of the moon it does not mean that the moon is not there. Similarly, the moon increases in its shining form during the waxing phase, and its disc gets progressively reduced in shape and brilliance during the waning phase, but this does not mean that the moon is actually increasing or decreasing in size or shape. Likewise, the *Atma*, represented by *Prajapati*, is constantly and perpetually there in an unchanging, eternal and universal form, but no one can see it just like no one can see the dark disc of the moon though it is very much there in existence in the sky. The *Atma* resides inside the body of a creature, the body which takes birth as an infant, progressively increases in size and form, it acquires strength and fame, becomes old and decays, and finally dies. But this does not affect true nature of the *Atma* at all. The *Atma* leaves this body and enters into another in the form of a new infant being born. Hence the simile with the moon is very apt for the *Atma* represented by *Prajapati*.

²This refers to the *dark disc of the moon* which is its true and fundamental form because the moon shines as a result of the sun's rays that fall upon its surface as it has no illumination of its own. Though the dark moon is not seen from the earth but it nevertheless is there in the sky; merely being not visible does not deprive the moon of its physical existence and its place amongst the heavenly bodies in the sky. The word *Dhruv* refers to this basic and unchanging fact about the truthful form of the moon which is its fundamental form that remains stable and is not subject to the sun's rays falling upon it. In other words, what we observe as a waxing and waning moon is an optical illusion which has nothing to

do with the real shape of the moon. Its real shape is the one that appears on the dark moon night, which we can't see. This shape is disc-like without illumination. This is the greatest paradox—that what we see is, in reality, not the truth, for the truth is beyond sight.

Likewise, the essential truth about the creature's 'pure and truthful self' is an irrefutable and stable Truth known as the pure conscious Atma. Similarly, the vital life-creating fundamental elements of creation such as the wind or air, the water, the fire, the sky and the earth elements that form the body of the creature are also stable and they do not perish with its death. The notion of birth and death is like the waxing and waning phases of the moon, while the dark disc is like the infinite nature of the truthful and essential form of the creature's true self. Here, the birth of a creature, its attaining its pinnacle of glories and its ultimate decline and death are compared to the waxing moon, the full moon and the waning phase respectively. The fundamental and principal form of the moon, called its 'Dhruva' form because it does not undergo any change, refers to the basic nature of the 'true self' of the creature as its unchanging and stable Atma.

From the metaphysical point of view, this metaphor of the waxing and waning moon and its dark disc refers to the fact that the Pran and the Atma of the creature, which refer to the vital wind/air and the pure conscious Soul respectively, are basically eternal and sublime entities like the moon. Depending upon the level of enlightenment and wisdom symbolised by the light of the sun's rays that fall upon the moon's surface, a creature can become mortal or immortal. That is, if the creature has attained a higher level of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment then it would realise that its 'true self', the Atma which is pure consciousness, is an eternal and imperishable entity like the moon which though not visible during the dark night is however there. Such creatures have an eclectic and holistic view and know that they never take a birth or die but simply assume one body after another depending upon their involvement in the various deeds done by the body in any given life. So they would endeavour to break free from this cycle and attain the stable and everlasting stature known as emancipation and salvation of their souls by merging it with its primary source, the supreme Soul of creation or Brahm. They would acquire such virtues as those possessed by the elements—viz. the stupendous energy and powers of the fire element, the force and potentials of the wind/air element, the vastness and omnipresence of the sky element, and the all-sustaining and all-bearing qualities of the water and the earth element.

But on the other hand, if the creature is ignorant of these fundamental principles about the Atma and its true self, then it thinks that it takes a birth as symbolised by the waxing phase of the moon, and it gets old and dies as represented by the waning phase. The various qualities that it possesses, metaphorically called its Kalaas, also undergo change depending upon its temperament and circumstantial compulsions.

Similarly, the unique eternal Brahm is also not visible like the dark disc of the moon during the dark night. This Brahm can be therefore ascertained only by intelligent inference from what is visible even as we deduce that the moon is present even during the dark night because we have seen it grow from the crescent shape to the full disc and then decline to another crescent shape before it vanishes the next night of the dark moon. When the moon reemerges the next night, ignorant people think that the moon has been born anew, but wise ones know that the moon is always there and it is visible simply because the sun's light has

once again made it visible, and its shape changes because of the angle by which it is viewed from the earth. The very fact that this creation keeps on pulsating between death and birth proves that there must be some subtle and mysterious authority that outlasts it and controls things when all the visible forces have ceased to function and come to rest. This esoteric, unseen and enigmatic authority is Brahm in which everything collapses at the time of conclusion and from which it reemerges again during the next phase of creation. This supreme and beyond comprehension entity is *Dhruv* because it possesses such eclectic qualities as being truthful, eternal, unwavering, stable, unchangeable, immutable and irrefutable. Everything else changes but Brahm doesn't.

The *night* is dark symbolising the veil of darkness representing delusions and ignorance that are the hallmarks of this mortal world in which the creature lives. The growth of the shape of the disc of the moon symbolises the growth of the creature from birth right up to its adulthood when it has reached its maturity and attains its maximum glory and reaches its pinnacle of achievements. Then the decline begins with old age, and it finally culminates in death when the moon's disc vanishes only to remerge the next night signifying the re-birth of the creature with a new body. This cycle shows that the creature's existence and its body are not stable; they change every now and then. But when the Pran ultimately merges with the cosmic wind or air element signifying the liberation and deliverance of the creature from the cycle of birth and death, the creature vanishes from sight for good just like the dark moon's disc. In that particular night when the dark disc of the moon is there in the sky, no one sees it though the moon is there. Likewise, when the Pran merges with the cosmic Soul then the spirit of the wise man becomes stable like the polar star which does not change every night like the moon. This is referred to as the sixteenth Kalaa of the moon.

This stanza can be interpreted in a different way as follows—the moon representing the Prajapati increases during the fifteen nights of the waxing phase of the moon, and decreases during the next fifteen nights of the waning phase of the moon respectively. That Prajapati becomes death like (i.e. dark, non-visible, foreboding) in his sixteenth Kalaa during the night of the dark moon, and he re-emerges the next morning as a new moon. That is, during the night of the dark moon, the Prajapati has ended his previous life represented by the waxing and waning phases of the moon. It has virtually died that night, but not actually so for it reappears once again as a new moon the next night. That is why this dark moon night is called the sixteenth Kalaa, or the phase that indicates that Prajapati, who is symbolised by the moon here, is basically eternal, steady and non-changing. It only appears to change in form, size and shape, but this change is merely an optical illusion, because as science has proved, the moon actually remains unchanging in its shape but appears to change its shape and location in the sky only because of the shadow of the earth that falls on it as well as the angle at which it is viewed from the earth with relevance to the position of the sun.

Hence, the Pran of the creature representing its Atma or Brahm also is eternal and unchanging like the truthful form of the moon, but the different bodies that the creature assumes are only due to the erroneous perceptions it has of its true self and the world in which it lives. The word 'night' is also significant here because the darkness of the night indicates the ignorance and delusions that engulf the creature during its existence in this world. That is also why the moon has been selected here instead of the sun because the latter is a metaphor for light of knowledge

as well as for the illumination of enlightenment and wisdom which would finally eliminate all darkness of ignorance.

³(a) The moon changes every night, and each shape of the moon is known as its *Kalaa*. On the other hand, the sun does not change in its shape, and therefore it does not exhibit any Kalaas. Similarly, a man is known to have Kalaas which refer to his different qualities and virtues. The word 'Kalaa' has many connotations. It inter alia means shape, form, especial qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc.; a division, portion, phase or degree; any kind of discharge; brilliance, magnificence and grandeur; fraud, deceit and trick; maverick and supernatural powers. It also refers to—(a) the sixteenth part of the moon's diameter/disc, or one of the various phases of the moon; (b) the twelfth part of the sun's diameter/disc; (c) the division of time equivalent to about eight seconds; (d) one degree out of the three hundred and sixty degrees. So when this term 'Kalaa' is applied to that supreme Truth, also known as the supreme Brahm, it implies that it is so grand, so majestic, so magnificent, so stupendous that it transcends the definitions or parameters set by this particular word. That Truth or Brahm is beyond their reach and dimension; these various connotations of the word cannot either be applied to that Truth or Brahm nor can they define it in its entirety in any way.

(b) The *sixteen Kalaas* of a man are his different attributes, strengths, qualities and virtues. Since a man is an exact replica of the 'Viraat Purush', who in turn is a subtle manifestation of the sublime Brahm, these sixteen qualities or attributes of a man refer to the sixteen qualities of Brahm himself. These qualities or attributes are the following — (i) Shraddha (श्रद्धा—faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (प्राण—life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (आकाश—the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (वायु—wind, air element), (v) Tej (तेज—energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element; see also section 2, 5 and 6), (vi) Apaha (अपः—water element which is the all-important ingredient for life—see also section 5 and 6) (vii) 'Prithivi' (पृथ्वी—earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation—see also section 5 and 6) (viii) Indriya (इन्द्रिय—the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (मन—mind and heart and their stupendous potentials—see also section 5 and 6), (x) Anna (अन्न—food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy—see also section 5 and 6), (xi) Virya (वीर्य—semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (तपः—austerity and penance, forbearance and tolerance of hardships, carrying out strict religious vows) (xiii) Mantra (मन्त्र—the ability to give good advise, the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (कर्म—taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (लोक—worldly interactions and behaviours), and (xvi) Naam (नाम—good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory).

In simple terms it means that a person's total composite personality, his characteristic attributes and individuality, his vitality and stamina, his prowess, powers and strength, his drive and vigour et al can be divided into sixteen parts.

The moon has been used in this verse as an analogy to explain the fact that the Atma or Pran, represented by Prajapati, only changes its form or external body like the waxing and waning phases of the moon,

but it does not undergo any actual change whatsoever in its true, basic and real form. The apparent changes that appear in the Atma are because the Atma assumes different bodies according to the deeds done by it in its previous life. But these forms are all misleading; if these myriad forms that the Atma assumes as its habitat are considered to be its truthful identity, then this is a completely erroneous and fallacious conception.

⁴One fears a policeman when one commits any sort of violence. When the supreme policeman in the shape of the supreme Authority known as Brahm and his representative the Atma is present at all times, even when and even though it is not visible, should not the creature fear him while causing harm or injury to another creature by killing it? Would there be no fear of punishment for such a heinous crime as murder done in the witness of the supreme authority, the Pran or Atma of the self? Again, this moon is regarded as the patron deity of Pran as is clearly mentioned in verse no. 13. So even though the moon is not visible during the dark night, by killing any creature a person is insulting the patron deity of Pran which also resides in his own bosom. Would such an act go without punishment? Is it not an insult of the patron deity of the Pran, i.e. the moon, when the man kills and harms the Pran of another creature, especially when the same Pran is present inside his own bosom and is giving him his life? Hence, it is ordained and expected that one should and would *not kill during the dark night of the moon*.

The most important observation here is that one should not kill because life is immortal. No one can darken the moon before its time for it to become dark by itself own self. So no one has the right to snuff out the Pran or the life of any particular individual creature from its body as long as the Atma has not reached the proper time to leave that body on its own accord. If one indulges in such acts, then it is indeed an unpardonable sin.]

15. The Samvatsar which has sixteen Kalaas (forms or shape or aspect) is surely Prajapati who is personified as the man who is enlightened about the esoteric secret behind this Prajapati¹.

‘Vitta’ or worldly wealth, assets and property represent its fifteen Kalaas, while the Atma or its fundamental truthful ‘self’ is its sixteenth Kalaa². In the world, a man’s position in society rises and falls in direct proportion to his rising and falling fortunes. The various Kalaas are like the outer ring of the wheel while the Atma is like the hub or axle of that wheel. That is why if a man loses every asset or wealth in this world and becomes bankrupt, but retains his life or Pran in the form of the Atma inside his body, he considers himself very fortunate³ (15).

[Note--¹This creator Prajapati has manifested himself as a human being. Just like the Prajapati, the man also needs food for himself and his progeny which represents the Prajapati’s creation. The grand virtues or Kalaas that Prajapati possessed are also possessed by the man, and he is called Samvatsar (literally one year) because he has a fixed life span, and one life of his is equivalent to one complete year because it involves birth, rise to the top of his youth and adulthood at the height of which he acquires the maximum of wealth and fame, and then his decline and death. As has been explained in note to verse no.14 above, the different phases of the moon are also metaphors for this phenomenon.

²The fifteen Kalaas are metaphors for the different qualities and virtues that a man possesses as described in note of the previous verse.

These Kalaas can increase and decrease according to various factors; they give him fame and respect in the world. These qualities are visible and observed by the world. So they are like the visible phases of the moon as described in verse no. 14. If by chance he loses one or all of them, he can strive to cultivate them once again and regain his lost stature. But this is possible only as long as he lives and has Pran in his body. That is why it is said that if the Atma survives, everything survives. This Pran or Atma is eternal and imperishable, it does not decay and die like the rest of the Kalaas. Therefore it is referred to as the sixteenth Kalaa which is the hidden eternal quality of being eternal and everlasting. Further, the fifteen Kalaas are visible like the various faces of the moon, while the sixteenth is concealed as the esoteric Truth symbolised by the dark face of the moon.

Obviously the entity that increases or decreases, enhances or decays, rises and falls, is definitely not the Atma. Then what is it? It is the physical body that the Atma assumes, and even if the body decays and dies, even if the body suffers and falls prey to bad times, for a wise, erudite and enlightened man it matters not as long as his Atma is healthy and robust. That is, as long as his Atma is not corrupted and influenced by the delusions that are so rampant in this world and an integral part of it, the man is not considered lost. On the other hand, if he has allowed his Atma or his true self to fall prey to worldly vices and perversions then he is deemed to be a lost case even though he might have a healthy and robust body which is well fed and handsome.

³Of such a body (which is compared to a wheel here), the Atma is like the axle (the central point upon which the wheel rotates), and the wealth is the outer circumference of this wheel. That is why it is said that if a person loses everything (i.e. if he loses all his assets and wealth which had been sustaining him in this materialistic world) and retains the vital strength, energy and the will power that are inherent qualities of the Atma, giving him courage, resilience, perseverance, steadfastness, firmness of resolution and determination, he is harmed only in a superficial and perfunctory way (i.e. his inner core remains intact, and the loss of his worldly physical assets do not harm him or affect his mental peace or demean his spirits or break his determination and strength in the long run at all. He might be shocked for a few days, but with the strength of his Atma, he soon picks himself up and moves ahead in life with renewed vigour. With hard work and diligent enterprise, he can produce the assets once again; even surpass what he had possessed earlier. But if there was no Atma in him, giving him the needed courage, strength, encouragement and vigour as well as firmness of resolution and determination to fight on, he would have crumbled and fallen apart literally. This proves that the Atma is at the core of the assets that a man possesses in the world; in fact, the Atma is his real wealth. If a person retains the courage and self-confidence provided by his Atma, he can tide over all difficulties.

Further, the various qualities that the Atma possesses are like the spokes of the wheel of which the Atma is the hub or axle. If the hub or axle is broken, the spokes or the peripheral ring of the wheel have no value; their relevance is dependent on the proper functioning of the axle or the hub. If there was no such thing as the Atma or the pure conscious soul of the creature, then none of the qualities or virtues have any relevance because a dead body which has no Atma or soul in it has no use of any of these qualities.

We note that this verse is a practical advice to mankind to face all adversities with courage, fortitude and resilience. Thus we find that these two verses, nos. 14 and 15, are sterling examples of how Upanishads are not merely theoretical metaphysical discussions of hypothetical and imaginary concepts, but are very practical in their approach to the problems faced by a creature in his day to day life. They give him sane advice.]

16. There are indeed three Lokas (worlds)—the world inhabited by humans called the ‘Manushya Loka’, the world of spirits where dead ancestors reside called the Pitri Loka, and the world of Gods called the Dev Loka.

The world of human beings can be vanquished and conquered by means of sons and not by anyone else; the world of the forefathers and ancestors can be vanquished and conquered by deeds; and the world of Gods can be vanquished and conquered by Vidya (knowledge, erudition, learning and scholarship). Out of these worlds, the one of Gods (Dev Loka) is considered as the best one, and that is why Vidya (acquisition of knowledge) is said to be the best thing to do, and it is lauded also for this reason (16).

[Note--The world of humans can be vanquished by sons because the son helps his father to accomplish things that the latter had not been able to do himself. The father needs his son to help him with his worldly affairs. History has many examples when the son had done much better and spread the fame of his father much more than the father might have done himself. The son accomplishes unfinished tasks of this father and helps to carry forward his legacy.

Similarly, the world of spirits can be conquered by doing deeds, because if a man does good and noble deeds while he is alive, he will not remain in the lower rungs of the heaven where the spirits live, but he will get final Moksha, or attain emancipation and salvation of his soul, which means that he will rise above the abode of spirits, called the Pitri Loka, and go to the ultimate heaven, called the Brahm Loka.

The world of Gods can be conquered by Vidya, or knowledge, because all the Gods represent the various sense organs of the body and its functions. With proper knowledge, a man is able to understand and realise the falsehood of this material world and futility of pursuing this deluding mirage. This fills him with renunciation and he stops himself from gratifying his natural instincts and natural temperaments. Instead, he diverts his attention towards his true self, the Atma, which is a representative of Brahm, and this provides him with the bliss and contentedness of self-realisation. Such a man is not a serf of the sense organs which are the symbolic abodes of different Gods. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he has conquered the Gods with his Vidya.]

17. Now, ‘Samprati’ is being described here. [The word ‘Samprati’ here refers to the act of initiation of the son ‘at this time’, or ‘at this moment’ as described now.]

When the father reaches a state when either he realises that the time of his death is approaching, or when he wishes to retire from active role and regards himself as an advisor to his son and lets the latter take care of the routine of daily life, its business and the affairs of the household (i.e.

when the father is old and ready to pass on the baton to his heir), he calls his son near him and says, 'Oh son! You are Brahm, you are Yagya (fire sacrifice) and you are my Loka (world) personified'.

The son answers him by saying, 'I am Brahm, I am Yagya, I am the Loka¹'.

Whatever truthful knowledge that exists in this creation pertains to one truth, and it is about the supreme transcendental Brahm².

Likewise, all endeavours in the world are covered by a single word 'Yagya', literally meaning any sacred ceremony or sacrifice³.

Similarly, all the Lokas (worlds) are one and covered by the single word 'Loka⁴'.

This is the duty of the householder. Every father wishes that his son would obey him. Hence, an educated and cultured son obeys his father and follows the rules of conduct as laid down by the scriptures and as instructed by his father. He does things righteously, auspiciously, honestly and diligently. He is therefore known by the term 'Lokya' (i.e. that which is worth seeing or observing; one that is worth praising, honouring and lauding).

A father who is wise and erudite and knows all these established procedures and follows them, then at the time of his departure from this mortal world (i.e. at the time of his death), he subtly and symbolically establishes himself, or leaves his identity and fingerprint behind in the form of his son (i.e. he passes on his responsibilities and his virtues to his son who is his heir and his true image like the father who was an image of the supreme creator Brahm.)

If due to some reason certain work is left unfinished by the father, then his son finishes off the task for him (after the father's death when the son taken charge). This is how a father's fame and glory are established and perpetuated in this world through his son.

What leaves with the father is his pure, Amrit-like Pran, i.e. the person who dies does not take anything from this world with him; everything is left behind. The only thing that goes with him is his Pran which is his vital wind and which is his true identity as his Atma which has no encumbrances. One must realise this fact⁵ (17).

[Note—¹The father advises his son to follow the righteous path leading to Brahm and to realise the fact the he is as holy, as auspicious, as eternal and as majestic and powerful as the supreme Brahm. The wise father has realised in the first instance that he is a personified Prajapati and now the time has come to initiate his son into the wisdom of which he was privy till now. After all, the intention of Prajapati was to propagate the creation in his own likeness, and this fundamental knowledge should be passed on by the present Prajapati, i.e. the father, to the next generation of Prajapati, i.e. the son. The subtle meaning of the use of the word *Prajapati* in this Brahmin in relation to the creator is very clear in the context of this verse.

So the father advises his son to realise the fact he is not an ordinary mortal, but an exalted soul, i.e. that he is none but the supreme Brahm personified. This is true because the Atma of the creature is his true identity, and this Atma is a manifestation of Brahm.

Then he advises him to uphold the sanctity of the different sacraments and religious duties and do them diligently by telling him that he is the Yagya personified. In other words, he advises his son to lead a

righteous and auspicious life and treat his entire life as one big holy sacrifice itself.

And by telling him that he represents the world, the father blesses his son to be successful in acquiring fame and glory in the world. The son should endeavour to enhance the good name of his father and carry forward the unaccomplished and unfinished tasks of the father and endeavour to complete or accomplish them himself. The son on his part accepts the inheritance and instructions of his father, and promises to fulfill them and live up to his father's expectations.

²In other words, the father advises the son to have equanimity of outlook and treat everyone alike, not to distinguish between a rich man and the poor man, to treat all the creatures equally with compassion and kindness because all of them are manifestation of the same Brahm.

³That is, the father advises his son to do his work selflessly as an offering to the sacred fire, as an oblation meant for the Gods, and treat all his deeds and actions as a holy, noble and religious exercise. The son should think that even his routine daily work is an offering to the fire sacrifice. This would automatically ensure that his deeds become consciously pure, auspicious and holy.

⁴The son is advised by his father that he should see no distinction between any two kinds of habitats. The son should be happy and contented with his present circumstances and not feel depressed or jealous when he sees others in a more prosperous and comfortable situation. This stanza has two connotations—viz. the son should treat all creatures, the humblest worm, insect and other lowly creature that live under the ground and even in the sky with the same attitude as he treats noble kings and exalted Brahmins. The other meaning is that he should treat his small house as being as comfortable and pleasant as the huge house of a rich man. He should never feel dejected or humiliated that he is not rich enough to possess vast mansions, for even a hermit's hut is comfortable for him. So we observe here that, for all practical purposes, the father assumes the role of a teacher and guide for his son.

⁵Similar ideas of the father passing on his worldly responsibilities to his son are expressed in detail in Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, canto 2, verse no. 11 of the Rig Veda tradition. This entire Upanishad has been published separately by this humble author as part of the anthology of the Rig Veda Upanishads.]

18. A person's power of speech has the element of earth and fire in it¹. The faculty of speech is said to possess divine qualities only when what one says is fulfilled², otherwise it becomes a boast (18).

[Note—¹The faculty of speech is like the *earth* because it has the gravity, density, and the virtues of reliability, stability and sustainability like that of the earth. Besides this, the faculty of speech is said to subtly harbour the fire element like the earth which also harbours the fire in its vast bosom. It is on it that a man depends for his existence and interactions with others in this world; he relies upon it to express his views and emotions as well as to learn what others have to say and what they think. A man relies more on what an eye witness says about an event than on what he has read about it somewhere. It is a solid proof of a man's knowledge, wisdom and erudition when he speaks wise words using his faculty of speech; others depend on what a wise man advises them. It has gravity when one is serious about anything he says, and such words are not to be ignored. We often consult seniors when we are in doubt, and

this process of discussing and consulting as well as telling also involves the faculty of speech.

This faculty of speech is like the *fire* because it has the elementary qualities of fire. It is as energetic, potent, powerful, fierce and forceful, and at times scorching, like the fire. A leader's powerful speech can turn the tide of history; it can arouse emotions and lead to great turmoil; it can even cause wars and animosity; it can fire revolutionary spirits in others and inspire them to act when all other means might have failed.

In short, this faculty is the only means by which a man expresses himself and makes great changes in the world and the way the people think and act by his words which are not limited only to his present immediate surroundings but even to the time in the distant future.

²That is, futile chatter is not the proper use of this faculty of speech. It should rather be used for purposeful purposes for which the supreme creator had created it, and the larger benefit of the society is one of them. If the energy of the speech is wasted in tattling or gossiping, it is deemed that the fire element in it is being insulted. If it used for accomplishing worldly gains, which are nevertheless perishable, at the cost of other creatures and at the cost of demeaning one's own Atma and its glorious stature, then the earth element is being insulted. To use this faculty of speech in the wrong way, such as to cause harm to other creatures by giving false witness, then it is tantamount to its insinuation. See also verse no. 4-7.

Further, it is this faculty that the father uses to give wise advice to his son as described in verse no. 17 above. In other words, the father becomes a de-facto spokes person for Brahm who advises his son through the medium of the faculty of speech to carry on the divine mandate of the Lord forward. Therefore, this speech assumes the glory associated with divinity. See also verse no. 11 in this context.]

19. His Mana (mind) becomes exalted and God-like due to the influences of the Duloka (the heavens where the exalted Gods live) and Aditya (the Sun God). When the mind is activated by the noble spirit representing the glorious virtues of the Gods, and the light of wisdom, erudition and knowledge symbolised by the brilliant light of the Sun, i.e. when it gets enlightened, it is then that it becomes perpetually happy and blissful, and is never subjected to sorrows and miseries (19).

[Note-- See verse no. 12 in this context. The mind of a man is what decides what that man makes of himself in this world because the mind controls all his thinking and actions. The various sense organs are the seats of the various Gods in creation who are none but personifications of the various powers and virtues that the body of the creature exhibits through these sense organs. The mind controls these sense organs, and therefore when it is influenced by noble virtues it is deemed that it has acquired Godly characteristics and would lead its wards, the sense organs, judiciously. The Sun is a metaphor for the light of enlightenment and wisdom in the creature. The Sun God has his abode in its eyes. It is through the eye that the other Gods representing the various sense organs of the body observe and see the outside world, acquires knowledge about it, and this sight gives the creature information that makes him so much the wiser. Therefore the Sun God is enlightening. The mind which has such exalted preceptors is sure to be as virtuous and exalted as them.

Thus, the Mana infused with the high spirit of divinity represented by the heavens and enlightenment represented by the brilliant sun,

perpetually remains in a state of bliss; it never suffers from worries and miseries associated with ignorance and delusions of this world.]

20. Possessed of the divine life sustaining, nourishing and enhancing qualities of the water element and the moon (as described in verse no. 13-14 above), the Pran, which is the vital wind that infuses life in all the creatures of this creation, enters the body and empowers the man who represents the God (known as Prajapati)¹.

It is this divine, exalted and majestic Pran that never tiers or feels miserable or sorrowful, and neither does it decay and get destroyed or diminutive in any point of time, whether or not it is flowing inside the body of a living creature².

The wise Atma—which is the truthful identity of the individual creature, is synonymous with it, and is present in all the living creatures universally—that realises the sublime and glorious virtues of this Pran as described here becomes one like it; it becomes synonymous with it³. Therefore, such a person becomes exemplary in his holistic views and outlook of the creation and its creatures.

A person who knows this fact becomes so enlightened that he symbolically becomes similar to the Pran of all the creatures⁴; all of them begin to adore him, revere him as their well-wisher and true friend. All the creatures therefore serve this exalted, erudite, self-realised and wise man as they would serve their own God called Pran; they honour, revere, admire and respect him for the exemplary virtues that he possesses, and the excellent values that he stands for which are similar to the ones exhibited by Pran, Atma and the patron God (Prajapati)⁵.

Worldly creatures remain mired in and engulfed by the numerous miseries and troubles associated with this mortal world and its mundane existence, but those who are wise about the essential and fundamental things in this creation which are the real truths and the absolute realities do not feel miserable inspite of various adversities that they face. Since they have acquired the exalted stature which is equivalent to godliness because of their wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation, sins and other perversions usually associated with this deluding world do not come near them. In other words, they remain unaffected and untouched by all the negative qualities and attributes associated with this mundane, artificial and deluding world (20).

[Note—¹In other words, the Pran symbolises the fact that the supreme creator known as Brahm has manifested himself as ‘life’ inside the body of the man whose body would have remained without any consciousness had it not been because of the Pran entering it and empowering it with the consciousness called life.

²The *Pran* is a term used to denote ‘life’ in all living creatures, whether they are *mobile* creatures such as the animals or *immobile* such as the plants. Obviously, the Pran is mobile in the members of the animal kingdom because they breathe (by inhaling and exhaling the Pran wind), pass wind both up as belching and coughing (Udaan wind), and down as flatus and the passage of stool (Apaan wind); they also get up and move about (Udaan wind); they have an active circulation system and a body that is full and robust (Samaan and Vyan wind). On the other hand, amongst plants this Pran remains in an immobile state because the plants

do not move about and show other signs of activity as usually depicted by their animal brethrens.

The Pran refers to the sublime vital winds that sustain life in the creation by being subtly present both inside as well as outside the body of the living being. Though the wind or air is inherently mobile and agile, it does not show any apparent signs of activity inside the body because it is packed tightly by other organs. Outside the body also, this wind/air sometimes appear to be absolutely static giving the feeling of stuffiness, but at other times it can roar and howl as during severe storms.

³That is, when the Atma becomes enlightened about the sublime nature of the vital wind called the Pran which is the only factor that lends 'life' to the otherwise dead and inane body of the creature in which the Atma lives, the latter realises the relevance, importance and significance of the Pran for its very existence in this world, because if there was no Pran the body would be dead, and the Atma would have no habitat for its self to live in.

The Atma is pure *consciousness* while the Pran is the *life* of a creature; they are the two aspects of the same coin. Without consciousness the creature has no relevance for the Pran, and life has no meaning if the creature has no Atma or soul in him. That is why they are synonymous terms; they both are equally important and significant, equally relevant, meaningful and vital for existence to sustain. Whether the Atma or Pran live in a man's body or make their exit from it at the time of his death, they do not lose their fundamental characteristic of being eternal, infinite and imperishable as well as of being eternally contented and satisfied which gives them the sublime virtue of blissfulness.

The *Pran* is that divine and sublime entity that has the potential of being able to empower a lifeless body with consciousness, while the *Atma* is the supreme resident authority in the body of the creature in whose service all the vital winds work.

⁴When it is supposed that the wise man identifies himself with the rest of the creatures, it means that he treats all the creatures alike and shares their sorrows and miseries. He does not treat himself as being in anyway superior to others; he has no sense of ego or false self pride. He does not think that he is in anyway senior, more exalted and has a higher standing in the social hierarchy and should therefore not mix with others who are poor and downtrodden. He does not live a cloistered life in a world of make-belief seniority and superiority, and instead identifies himself more with the ordinary people and lives amongst them as one of them, and shares their happiness and miseries. This would normally entail his becoming as miserable and sorrowful as these creatures because he empathises with them. But this does not actually happen and he remains ever contented and blissful inspite of living in a sea of sorrows around him because he is enlightened and wise about the actual truth behind the false façade of this deluding world whereas the rest of the creatures aren't—he realises that these sorrows and sufferings are felt because the creature thinks this world to be real and its gross physical body as its true self which is subjected to sorrows and sufferings, instead of seeing through the smokescreen of falsehood and realising the futility and illusionary nature of this conception. This is because neither the body is the 'true self', nor the 'true self' suffers because of the sufferings of the body. The true self or the Atma is beyond such influences.

Inspite of remaining detached from everything, he is still full of mercy and compassion for others. He is a pious soul who worries for others as much as he worries for his own self.

The Holy Bible says—‘I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep’ (St. John, 10/11.) ‘My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands. My father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand’ (St. John, 10/27-29.)

⁵In other words, he becomes wise and erudite enough to guide all other people with whom he comes in contact. These people would have remained as stupid and like dead wood, spending their life in vain pursuits had it not been their good fortune that they have come in contact with him. It is a metaphoric way of saying that such a wise man infuses and injects the vital spark of enlightenment, wisdom and knowledge in those people who would have been otherwise ignorant and stupid. That is, he makes their lives meaningful and fruitful which is a way of saying that he becomes their Pran or life. The people look up to him in their hour of sorrows and miseries for solace and succour. A life that is lived righteously and auspiciously, that is used to serve the creation and its creatures instead of indulging in self gratification and enjoyment of sensual pleasures is actually ‘lived’, while that which does not observe this noble principal is as good as ‘not lived’. A wise man who has served others is remembered reverentially for eternity as opposed to those who lead a selfish life which is inconsequential and worthless for others.

Such a wise man also becomes as exalted as that God called Prajapati, the supreme creator who is the patriarch of this creation, because he is selfless in his temperaments and treats everyone alike; he gives equal importance to all forms of life and provides sustenance and succour to all the creatures of creation without distinguishing between them based on their colour, caste, creed, birth, beliefs and faith etc.]

21. [This verse deals with the concept of ‘Vrat’ (व्रत), which literally means a resolve, a vow and a firm determination to do anything. Here it refers to the various habits of the sense organs of the body, and elucidates upon which one out of them should be our ideal habit, which one should be followed and admired by a creature.]

Now we shall discuss about ‘Vrat’. Prajapati Brahma created deeds (or the organs that perform various deeds) after creation. The organs began having envy and jealousy with each other; each treated the other as its rival and there was a stiff competition for superiority amongst them, thereby creating unnecessary friction and animosity between them.

The faculty of speech declared (or made a resolve) that it would always speak. The eyes said that it would always see. Likewise, the ears insisted that it would continue to hear. Similarly, all the organs took a vow, or each one of them made a resolution according to their capacity and aptitude.

The Death God, in the form of weariness, tiredness, fatigue, lethargy and despondency as well as inertia and indolence caught hold of and corrupted them all; it virtually cast its dark shadow represented by the negative traits mentioned above upon them, as a result of which the organs lost their original vigour, vitality and stamina. That is why we find that

the faculty of speech gets tired when a man talks too much for too long. Likewise, the eyes and ears also get tired and fatigued in due course of time (and that is why one has to close the eyes if he works with it for any length of time without giving it rest). It is also why at the time of death of the body all these organs cease to function.

But this Death God could not cast its evil influence upon the medium which makes these organs actually work and have their consciousness as well as their importance, i.e. the medium called 'Pran'¹.

That is why, Pran never tires and feels weary and fatigued (i.e. a person never tires of breathing. He may tire of seeing, of hearing and of speaking, but he never gets fed up of breathing. In fact, if he stops breathing, he would die instantly).

This made all other sense organs realise the supremacy of Pran. This is because whether or not the Pran flows inside the body (as described in verse no. 20), it never gets tired, it never decays, it never diminishes in its vitality and stamina, and it never comes to an end.

Therefore, all the organs decided to become like the Pran (i.e. they decided that henceforth they would regard themselves as dependants of the Pran God and use his name as their surname), and that is why the word 'Pran' is used also for all these organs singly as well as collectively². The organs are therefore collectively and individually known as Pran; Pran is an epithet to describe all the organs as well as their surname and title.

A person who knows this fact becomes so respected and considered senior amongst his peers that the family to which he belongs acquires his name; the line of his heirs assume his name as their title or surname. Those who are opponents of such an erudite, sagacious, wise and scholarly man are put to shame; they virtually wither away and vanish into oblivion.

This view about Pran is called the 'spiritual philosophy pertaining to Pran' or the 'Pran's Adhyatma-Darshan' (21).

[Note--¹The Pran is the basic life sustaining factor that enables all the organs of the body to function. The adjective 'medium' is used to define that basic driving force that is the agency, the means and the intervening force that enables the organs of the body to function. The Pran injects 'life' in the otherwise inane and lifeless organs. Had it not been for the Pran, none of the organs would have been able to perform their task—e.g. the eye would not have been able to see, the ears would not have been able to hear, and the tongue or the mouth would not have been able to taste and speak. This Pran is therefore superior to all the organs. This fact has been clearly laid out in Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse nos. 1-23, as well as verse nos. 20 and 22 of the present Brahmin. Besides this, Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse nos. 2-23 describes the same concept in relation with the Atma which is like the Pran pervading through the creation.

²The different sense organs who earlier had thought that they had independent origin which was superior to that of the other organ, and that they have their own working abilities which was far more important and significant than their brethren's, now decided to become blood brothers and trace their lineage from one superior God called Pran. Even as a man attaches the name of his forefathers after or before his own independent name, these organs came to be collectively known as 'Pran'.

Since Pran is synonymous with life and vitality and stamina, we say that the man is able to see because the organ of sight, i.e. the eye, has 'Pran' or life in it. This is evident in the fact that when a person dies, his

eye is present in his body but he is not able to see because his Pran has made its exit from his body. This logic applies to all the other organs too.

When one is hit severely and, say, his eyes are blinded, he says ‘Oh my God, my eyes hurt so much that I feel my ‘Pran’ has left my body. In this case, the word Pran is used as a metaphor for the eye. This expression that his ‘eyes are hurting so much that he feels that his Pran has left his body’ is an expression of the intensity of pain that he feels in his eye when it is gravely hurt and wounded. The phrase usually used for expressing utmost distress when any organ is harmed is ‘my Pran appears to be leaving my body, and I am immensely distressed’.]

22. [Verse no. 21 described the resolve made by the organs of the body and their ultimate realisation that Pran was the senior most amongst them. This discussion was at the micro level of creation, i.e. at the level of the individual body. Now this verse deals with the same concept as it is applied to the different Gods who preside over this vast creation at the macro level.]

Now the philosophy called ‘Adhidaivat’ (अधिदैवत) is being elaborated upon. The Fire God made a resolve that it would continue to burn. The Sun resolved that it would continue to provide heat and energy perpetually. The Moon decided that it would also shine indefinitely. Similarly, all the other Gods made firm resolves depending upon their individual abilities, aptitudes, prowess, acumen, potentials and designated authority. Just like the Pran is established as the supreme, sublime, most important and the vital but subtle force amid the organs of the body (as described in verse no. 21), the primary form of Pran known as the ‘wind or air element’ personified as the Wind God is the paramount and most significant God (factor) amongst the Gods at the macro level of creation, being eternal and infinite as well as all-pervading and omnipresent¹.

This is because the other Gods come to an end sooner or later, but the Wind God does not² (22).

[Note—¹The wind/air pervades throughout the length and breadth of the space of the sky. All the Gods, such as the Sun, the Moon and the Fire are present in the sky, but they have a localized existence. Though the Fire can be present everywhere in a subtle form, but in the context of the Sun it is present in this particular entity in a visible form because the Sun appears to be a crucible of eternally burning fire. But compared to them, the wind or the air element is never visible though it is ever present everywhere. Even the fire needs the air to keep its self burning. The fire can be put out by a strong gust of wind, but the wind cannot be harmed by the fire. Since this air element is synonymous with ‘life’ of everything that exists, it follows that it is also the life of the Gods as well.

²The Wind God represents the air element that pervades throughout the sky; it is present everywhere. Even after the visible world comes to an end, this element would continue to live in the post-destructive phase of creation. That is why we say that after life comes to an end on this planet, the cosmic wind fills the space formed by the void left behind by the extinct world and howls across it. This is evident in war fields and in deserts where there is no trace of life; it is observed that a fierce wind blows there, howling ominously. So this wind/air continues to be eternally present in the sky and continues to blow perpetually and

indefinitely even after the end of this world. It is universally and uniformly present everywhere in equal proportion. It cannot be said that the air is less here and more there; it is only due to its movement that we regard it as being less here and more active there.

The Sun sets in the evening, the Moon waxes and wanes, the Fire can be extinguished, but the wind always remains present everywhere till eternity—whether it is felt when it blows as during a storm, or not felt when it is static as in a closed room— as far as the space of the sky extends.]

23. There is the following Shloka (a scriptural verse establishing the veracity of a particular axiom or maxim)— ‘This Aditya (the Sun God) rises from the same place where it sets’. That is, it rises from the Pran and it sets in the Pran itself. All the Gods have similarly followed this rule of rising from the vital wind called Pran, which is a metaphor for life and consciousness, and then finding their rest in it¹.

This rule that the Gods resolved to follow then is being followed by them even now, and shall be followed by them in the future also.

This establishes the maxim that one should adhere to his ‘Dharma’ (i.e. one should diligently stick to the righteous path chosen by him according to the prescription of the scriptures that is auspicious and noble) from start to finish. [That is, one should be resolute and firm in following righteousness and virtuousness notwithstanding the difficulties that one has to face because of this firm resolution. This is because ‘the works that I do in my father’s name, they bear witness of me’—Bible, St. John, 10/25; ‘Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk as ye have us for an example’ (Philippians, 3/16-17)].

One should exercise control over one’s Pran and Apaana winds (i.e. the breath flowing through the nostrils and the wind moving down the intestines respectively by the process called ‘Pranayama’ as described in the various Upanishads dealing with Yoga) so that the various sins and perversions and other misdeeds symbolising death, decay and destruction do not touch or even come near the spiritual aspirant’.

The next tenet is — ‘If a person accepts any vow or makes any resolve, he should ensure that he takes it to its natural conclusion or see to it that it is carried out properly and the aim sought is fully achieved’.

By doing so, he obtains the exalted stature which makes him successfully attain the state called Sayujya (i.e. being one like one’s chosen deity) and Salokya (i.e. to be able to live in the abode of the chosen deity in his close proximity)² (23).

[Note—¹When a man sleeps, all his senses withdraw themselves and remain ensconced in the subtle Pran or the vital life present in his sleeping body. When he wakes up, these senses leap back to life and continue with their duties as they had been doing previously. The different Gods are personified forms of the various forces of Nature and the various functions of the different organs of the body of the creature. When the man sleeps he closes his eyes, which is symbolised by the setting of the Sun because the Sun God subtly resides in the eye as its ability to see and its sense of sight. When he wakes up, he first opens his eyes before any other organ become active. This first sign of life is

symbolised by the rising Sun. Once the Sun rises in the morning, all the creatures wake up and the daily grind of the humdrum life begins afresh. It is also observed that when the sun sets, a wind begins to blow across the plains and higher reaches of the mountains, giving the impression that the sun is setting in the bowls of the wind thereby physically establishing the truth of the statement that the 'Sun sets in the wind/air element', or that the Sun God comes to rest in the witness of the Wind God.

This analogy applies to all other Gods also.

²These two concepts have already been explained in this Brahmin, especially verse nos. 11-15 and 20-22. A wise man treats himself as one who is possessed of the grand and noble virtues that are the hallmarks of the different Gods. These Gods do not live outside anywhere but in his own self as the various vital functions of his body. They are established in his own self or his own Atma. In other words, he has found closeness with these exalted Gods (Salokya) and become one with them (Sayujya). Since these Gods are the different manifestations of the supreme Brahm himself who is present in the man's own bosom as his Atma (Salokya), it follows that there is no difference between a wise man and these Gods (Sayujya).

The word 'Sayujya' means to have a form which is the same as a person's chosen deity, and the word 'Salokya' means to have a residence in the abode of the chosen deity. The chosen deity in the case of a wise and enlightened man is his Pran. Hence, the wise and enlightened aspirant attempts to merge his pure consciousness, called his Atma which is his true self, with the Pran which is his chosen deity, in the way described here. Once the Atma becomes one like the Pran, or once the distinction between them is removed, the spiritual aspirant also becomes one like the wind element, i.e. he symbolically acquires all the qualities of the wind element. That is, he becomes eternal, imperishable and infinite like the wind element. Therefore, such a person has no pain or suffers any torment at the time of death; he has no fear of death. See verse no. 20 in this context.

When a man follows his auspicious instincts and leads a righteous life, exercises control over his organs and strive to find emancipation and salvation for his soul, then at the time of death he would establish his consciousness represented by the Atma in his Pran which is a metaphor for the vital wind forces of Nature that infuse life in a body. Both these entities, the Atma and the Pran, are eternal, infinite, imperishable, all-pervading and all-encompassing. As a result, such a person makes a quite and calm exit from the body alongside the breath leaving the body for the last time.

In other words, an enlightened person who realises that his Atma is his true conscious self, and the vital wind element of Nature is his life giving Pran, then such a person dies peacefully because his Atma rides piggy-back on the Pran and makes a quiet exit from the body. Such a person neither feels the agony and pain of the dying body nor does he attempt to cling to it because he has long disassociated himself from the notion of the body as his 'self'. Further, the Pran as the wind/air element has a tendency to move out of the limitations imposed by the gross body and find freedom in the open space outside it. The wind does not like to be tied anywhere, and that is why it is only too glad to leave the body and find liberation.

The Holy Bible says the following about the way a righteous man lives his life and fears not death because it is a means of merging oneself

with the supreme Brahm—‘For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a state betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you (Philippians, 1/21-24). About merging of one’s self with Brahm and the fact there is no fundamental distinction between the two, the holy book says—‘I and my Father are one’ (St. John, 10/30.)

Canto 1, Brahmin 6

[This Brahmin summarises the concepts enunciated in previous Brahmin nos. 1-5.]

1. Whatever there is in this world is in the form of a triad or a triumvirate consisting of a name (Naam), a form or shape (Roop), and deeds and actions (Karma).

The cause or origin of all the ‘names’ is the faculty of speech. A person calls out another person by his name, and to do so he needs the faculty of speech. No name of a person or a thing can be pronounced without voice or speech, and no identity can be established without a name.

The voice or the faculty of speech is the equivalent of the ‘Sam’ (i.e. the essence, the beauty, the charm, the characteristic feature, the importance and significant factor) of all names. The voice is the common factor to all names; it is the common denominator that is present in names no matter to whom that name belongs. Without the presence of the voice no name can be pronounced, and no one can be called.

The voice or faculty of speech is also like the Brahm (the Atma or soul or life) of all the names because it is the foundation that accepts, holds and bears all the names of all the things or creatures in this world; it is the basis which made the appearance of names possible (because only a living creature has a name and anything that is of any use is assigned a name) [That is, just like the body has relevance because it has the soul in it which makes it alive, any name has any relevance because that body is alive. No one assigns a name to any dead body.] (1).

[Note :- Please also refer to Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse nos. 20-22, 25-27); Brahmin 4, verse no. 7; Brahmin 5, verse no. 5-7, 11 in this context.]

2. The eyes are the cause or the origin of all physical shapes and forms in this creation. This is because a man sees anything in this world through the eyes. Had there been no eye, the man would not have been able to see any shape, form, size, contour, colour etc. of anything that exists; they would have lost their relevance for him.

The eye sees everything with a sense of equanimity, i.e. it sees and observes everything that comes within its range of vision without distinction between any given two entities. The eyes do not decide what to see and what not to see (because this is not its mandate, for this is the

exclusive domain of the mind). That is why the eye is called the 'Sam' of all shapes, sizes, contours, colours and forms that are visible and can be seen or observed by a creature in this creation because it is the underlying common denominator that makes it possible for the creature to see or observe anything at all. No one can see without the eye¹.

Since the eye is the foundation which bears or holds or accepts all things seen (i.e. which helps the mind to remain focused on the object seen or being observed by it, and it does not get distracted in its job), since the eye bears the faculty of sight (for it is the eye which has the aptitude and ability to bear this sublime faculty which no other organ has) and it enables a person to see things of the external world, it is therefore known as Brahm (or the soul or the Atma or the essential life) of all forms, sizes, shapes, colours and contours that exist in this world² (2).

[Note--¹In other words, the importance that anything worth seeing has for the man is because of the eye, for it is the eye that enables the man to see and observe it. The perception of sight present in the eye is a common denominator in the process of seeing or observing all things that are visible in this creation. No other organ has this capability. Therefore it is like the Sam of anything that can be seen and observed. It is the essential ingredient in the entire process of seeing; it is the fundamental necessity that enables a person to see anything. It is the fundamental requirement by the person to enable him to see the world outside. It is therefore the quintessence of the process of seeing; it is the basic requirement for the enjoyment of anything which is pleasant to look at, and it is due to this faculty of sight that a person enjoys the beauty and charm of this fascinating and enchanting world outside. A blind man cannot enjoy any beautiful scenery no matter how pleasant and vibrant in colour it might be. That is, the faculty of sight and the organ of the eye are to the visible world of form and colour what the faculty of hearing and the organ of the ear is to the world of sound and music, and the faculty of speech and the organ of the tongue are to the name of a thing or person.

²This is because without the eye, a person would not be able to see and enjoy this beautiful world even as without the Pran and the Atma representing the supreme Brahm, no person can live and enjoy his life. Just like the Atma is the essence of the body without which the body has no utility, the eye is central to the entire process of seeing the visible world. Just like a dead body doesn't see anything in this world, nothing can be seen in this world without the eye. The eye is like the conscious factor that links the outside visible world to the creature's own self much as the fact that the Atma links the creature to the supreme Soul of creation.

See also canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse 4 and 14; as well as Brahmin 4, verse no. 7.]

3. The Atma, working through the body of an individual, is the entity that is the 'primary or original cause' of all deeds and actions. It is the bed or foundation from where all deeds and actions have originated. This is because a dead body that has no Atma or consciousness in it does not perform any task. Obviously, for all practical purposes the deeds are done by the body; without a physical body, the Atma can't do anything.

Now, this body is the only medium that does all deeds and performs all tasks. It treats all deeds equally and with equal importance. Therefore,

the body in which the Atma lives and which is used by the Atma to do anything, is the 'Sam' of all deeds and actions¹.

Since it is the body that does everything, it is the locus-standi of all deeds and therefore it is called the Brahm of all deeds and actions².

It is from the Atma (the pure conscious soul that gives the creature its individuality and infuses the vital consciousness in its body making its life possible) that name (Naam), form and shape (Roop), as well as deeds and actions (Karma) have originated because without the Atma the body would be worthless and dead, not having any significance and relevance for either the world or the creature himself. A dead body that has no soul in it, no consciousness in it, has no name, does no deeds, and its dead form is not appreciated by anyone.

Therefore, these three (the name, the form and the deed), though appearing to be different and separate from each other, are essentially manifestations of the same entity called the Atma. This Atma is one and non-dual; it is the supreme authority and the conscious factor that gives these three their importance and locus standi.

Likewise, the Atma, though being only one and non-dual, reveals itself as these three—the 'name' that is assigned to different living entities in which the Atma lives in this creation and which gives them their individuality, the 'form' that these living entities having the Atma assume, and the 'deeds and actions' that the Atma performs through these myriad bodies having numerous names and forms.

The Atma nevertheless is covered or protected by 'Satya' (truth), and is as pure, glorious, magnificent and eternal as the ambrosia called 'Amrit'.

Pran is a form or manifestation of this Amrit³. Name and Form are also truthful⁴.

The Pran is covered or veiled or shadowed or enveloped or wrapped by these two—Amrit and Satya. That is, it has the characteristics of both Amrit as well as of Satya. In other words, it is the eternal essence of life like the Amrit, and it is as truthful as the Truth itself personified (3).

[Note—¹It is called *Sam* because the body does not differentiate between any two given tasks assigned to it. The body treats all assignments with equal importance, treating them with equanimity and making no distinction between them because they are a divine mandate from its Lord, the Atma residing in its bosom as its sovereign. For example, the body gives equal importance to the elimination process of the waste matter of the body through the organs of the anus, the kidney as well as the lungs. It does not think that either of them is more important than the other. It coordinates the functions of the organ of action such as the hands, the legs, the mouth, the genitals and the excretory organs so that these organs can perform their respective jobs in a synchronized way. Likewise, it establishes a harmony between the various organs of perception such as the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin, and ensures that they work in tandem. Similarly and simultaneously it coordinates the functioning of the organs of perceptions with the organs of action so that they work together simultaneously and harmoniously in a congenial and cooperative manner.

If we extend this argument further we observe that body does evil deeds with the same equanimity and fortitude and indifference of attitude as it does good deeds. It is the mind as the secretary of the Atma that

actually runs the whole show. That is why it is ordained that one should learn about the mind (called the Mana of the creature) and endeavour to control it—see Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 3 in this context.

²The body is virtually the only entity that makes doing deeds and taking actions feasible and practical. It is like the Atma that gives meaning to the concept of doing deeds and taking actions, for without a body ‘deeds and actions’ would just not exist and would lose their relevance. Much like the importance that the Atma has for the creature’s existence, the body bears the same importance vis-à-vis the deed and action; they have their existence and relevance for the creature because the body can take actions and do deeds. Therefore, the body is like the *Brahm* (soul, Atma and the supreme authority) of all deeds and actions because it enables the deeds to be physically done and the actions to be actually taken, and at the same time it bears the consequences of these deeds and actions even as *Brahm* is the sole authority that is responsible for all that is happening in this creation and it cannot absolve itself of this responsibility. Had there been no physical body, these words known as ‘deed’ and ‘action’ would perhaps not have existed in the dictionary for the Atma.

³The Pran is the very ‘life’ of the creature; it infuses the body with its vitality and stamina and gives it its life-force. It is equivalent to Amrit which is a metaphor for the best essence or fundamental aspect of anything because amongst the host of different factors in creation jostling with each other for grabbing importance, it is the Pran which won hands down in the final analysis as has been clearly stressed in Brahmin 3 of this Canto.

⁴Upanishadic philosophy emphasises the fact that this world and the body, the name and the form of this world as well as that of the body are deluding, illusionary and an imaginative creation of the mind. Since the body is imaginary, it is therefore false. Since the world also is imaginary, it is also false. Therefore the deeds done by an imaginary body in an imaginary world are also false just like the deeds done by a man while he is asleep are imaginary and false.

But this canto basically deals with the process of creation of this visible world. It tells us how the visible world manifested from that supreme entity which is invisible. So, though the Atma is truthful and the world is a falsehood, but since the cosmic supreme *Brahm*’s conscious self known as its Atma fused its self in its entirety with its own creation and it merged itself uniformly and universally in it like sugar or salt dissolving in water, leaving no trace of their original identity or form, this cosmic invisible supreme entity’s Atma became synonymous with the visible world. In the example of the water in which the salt or sugar has been dissolved, the latter become indistinguishable and inseparable from the former. Likewise, the Atma becomes indistinguishable and inseparable from the world in which it lives.

When the supreme *Brahm* decided to reveal this visible world, he had to make it gross in order to make the world visible. He had to give this gross visible world some name by which it would be known, some form that was visible, and some deed that this new creation should do in order to perpetuate itself. In short, though this world was a conception of the mind of the supreme creator, but once it came into ‘being’, it acquired all the signs that were characteristic of *Brahm* himself—it could reproduce and perpetuate itself, it could think and imagine for itself, it could do deeds and take actions independently for itself, it could evolve and develop itself without any external help, it could even conclude itself by

wars and strife. So for all practical purposes this creation and its components had a 'truthful' existence. Further, since any 'truthful entity' can recreate itself in its 'own likeness', this creation is also 'truthful' because it is a self-creation of the ultimate Truth, the supreme transcendental Brahm.

Now therefore, Brahm created the gross body of the creature and took up residence in it as its Atma. Being present as an integral and an inseparable part of this world, it enables one to add the adjective 'truthful' to this world even as water with sugar dissolved in it is called 'sweet', and water with salt dissolved in it is called 'salty'. The world as we see and observe—having a name and form and based on deeds and actions—is a revelation of the Brahm in the form of the Atma. So, in as much as we see this world as a revelation of Brahm in the form of the Atma, it is indeed true and Amrit-like, but shorn of this truthful Atma, it is false, imaginary and deluding.

In the instance of the 'sweet' water in which sugar is dissolved for example, when it is considered in its basic form, we realise that its 'sweetness' is due to some factor which is extraneous to the water which is basically bland to taste. It is the 'sugar' imperceptibly dissolved in the tasteless and bland water which renders it 'sweet'. The same logic can be applied to the 'salty' water in which salt has been dissolved. And this logic can be extended to the world in which the Atma is imperceptibly but surely, irrefutably and irrevocably present. It is the Atma which lends importance to this world; the latter would be meaningless and useless without the presence of the former in it. This is the significance of this verse in a nutshell.]

Canto 2, Brahmin 1

[This Brahmin narrates the conversation between the haughty and arrogant sage Gargya Balaki, and the enlightened and wise king Ajatshatru, the king of Kashi, the present day city of Varanasi, elucidating and expounding upon the concept of Brahm and Atma. Gargya Balaki was very proud of his theoretical knowledge of Brahm and he approached king Ajatshatru of Kashi (Varanasi) to show off his knowledge in order to impress the king and get a huge amount of donation. But as it turned out, he only showed his ignorance of Brahm by telling the king that he worshipped him *merely* as the Purush residing in the various gross manifestations of Nature instead of understanding the subtle and sublime meaning behind why Brahm should be worshipped as such. Balaki based his praise and worship of Brahm as Purush (verse nos. 2-13) as he had learned it from the Vedas without understanding the import of what the scriptures imply when they extol the virtues of this Purush as the supreme Brahm in each of these entities. The word *Purush* means someone who resides in a body, but it is not his physical characteristics and theoretical presence that is important from the perspective of metaphysics and theology as much as the hidden, enigmatic, divine and eclectic significance of the stupendous and majestic qualities, virtues and attributes that they represent. This is where Balaki failed. The wise king admonished the sage for his lopsided and incomplete knowledge of Brahm,

and so he countered each version of Balaki as to what or where Brahm is with a more comprehensive picture that debunked the arguments proffered by the sage. At last, the sage conceded defeat and accepted the discipleship of the king (verse no. 14). The king then preached him citing the example of a sleeping man to highlight the real meaning of Atma and its four states of existence (verse nos. 15-20).

The versions of Brahm as propounded by Balaki were only a distorted and incomplete view of Brahm. Ajatshatru emphasises that he would rather worship Brahm as the underlying active ingredient, the quintessential force and authority that lends importance to any of these individual entities as well as the powers, authority, potentials, glory and majesty that they display that is more important and more reflective of the supremacy of the almighty and enigmatic Brahm than merely offering oblations and prayers to an abstract entity.

The discussion even incorporated the Atma in verse no. 13 when the sage said that he worshipped Brahm as the Atma, at which the erudite king rejected his contention, saying in effect that Brahm is so mysterious that merely saying that Atma is Brahm is insufficient because Brahm is not only consciousness as Atma is usually known and understood to be, but more importantly, as wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment personified. No one has actually seen the Atma, but the sublime, divine, almost magical and holy virtues that a living being exhibits is a proof of it. Therefore, Brahm is a subject of research and contemplation, and merely saying that it is the Atma is insufficient.

This same metaphysical discussion occurs, with some variations, in Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 4 of the Rig Veda tradition, an English version of which has been published separately in this series of Upanishads.

1. OM salutation! Once upon a time, a sage named Balaki, who belonged to the lineage of the ancient sage Garg, went to the king of Kashi (Varanasi), the wise and enlightened king named Ajatshatru, and said to him haughtily, 'I shall preach you about Brahm!'

Ajatshatru replied, 'For this gracious and magnanimous gesture of yours, I shall donate one thousand cows to you, because the subjects (i.e. the people) talk about Janak repeatedly and try to reach him (in order to satisfy their queries about spiritual and metaphysical questions, to hear spiritual discourses from him at his place, and to gather donations and largesse because he is known to hold mega festivals where learned ones from distant corners of the world assemble to discuss and hear metaphysical and theological subjects as well as be abundantly rewarded for such participation because he is famous for giving charities) (1).

[Note :- ¹Kind Ajatshatru refers to king Janak of Janakpur, who was the father of Sita and father-in-law of Lord Ram. He was considered the wisest and most enlightened ascetic-king of his time. He was a great donor as well as a great scholar of theology, metaphysics and spirituality. That is why people sought him out, both for largesse as well as for knowledge. Here, Ajatshatru implies that he is so fortunate that such a great exponent of Vedant philosophy, which pertains to Brahm, as sage Balaki has come to him uninvited to volunteer that transcendental and

supreme knowledge of Brahm for which people take great trouble of going long distances and suffering great hardships to reach king Janak's place. The privilege and honour of hearing spiritual and metaphysical discourses is being offered to him on a platter, as it were, right in his own palace, and so he would donate one thousand cows just to celebrate the happy occasion, as well as the honour and privilege bestowed upon him by sage Balaki.]

2. Then sage Gargya Balaki said, 'I worship and admire the Purush¹, who is present in Aditya (i.e. in the dazzling and splendorous disc of the Sun) as Brahm²'. [That is, Balaki worshipped and honoured Brahm, the supreme transcendental Being in his visible gross manifestation as the body of the Sun in the sky.]

Hearing this, Ajatshatru replied, 'Please do not say this. [That is, I know this much, but this is not the wholesome identity of Brahm, and neither does it define the latter.] Instead, I worship, adore and honour that Brahm who is like the head of all, who supersedes everything that exists, and is the unquestionable king of all³. [That is, the king worshipped and adored these qualities of Brahm rather than his mere physical appearance as the Sun in the sky.]

Anyone who realises this fact about Brahm and worships him as such, becomes like the head of all the creatures, is able to become superior to others, and is like their king⁴' (2).

[Note—¹According to Vedanta, the word *Purush* refers to the primary and supreme creator of creation known as the Viraat Purush who represents the macrocosmic gross Male body or aspect of the cosmos and is the first macrocosmic gross revelation of Brahm. Ultimately, this Brahm is the Supreme Being who has revealed himself as the Viraat Purush. The creation unfolded from this Purush when he metamorphosed as the gross body of the entire creation, visible and invisible. Therefore, he is the sum-total of all the gross bodies of all the creatures taken together in this creation at the macrocosmic level, and it is from his macrocosmic body that the entire creation was moulded. In other words, the Viraat Purush represents and embodies the entire spread of the cosmos. At the micro level of the world, the individual creature is the counterpart of Viraat Purush. In other words, the individual gross body of the creature is the microcosmic form of that Viraat, because the entire creation is a manifestation of the same Viraat; it is an image of Viraat.

Literally, the word 'Purush' means someone who resides in a body. Here the body is the gross forms of the various entities of creation in which the Viraat Purush, as the cosmic manifestation of the supreme Brahm, took up residence at the time of creation and does so since that time. When the creation would finally wind up, this Viraat would revert back to his original form as the invisible Brahm. An entire Sukta in the Rig Veda, 10/19 is dedicated to this Viraat Purush, and it is included as appendix no. 3 of the volume dealing with the Upanishads of the Veda in this series.

In the Purans, he is also known by other names, such as Vishnu, the sustainer. Since the Viraat is the male aspect of creation and the primary source of life, Vishnu is also regarded as the creator as well as the sustainer of the creation. But since Vishnu, as Viraat Purush, is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, the supreme transcendental Being, he is also regarded as being synonymous with Brahm. The entire universe

has been created by Vishnu's passive powers using Shakti as its active power and partner.

The word *Viraat* refers to something that is vast, colossus, immeasurable, fathomless, and infinite and beyond all terrestrial yardsticks. The supreme Lord encloses the entire creation like an envelop from the outside, and at the same time he remains uniformly and inseparably present throughout it like salt dissolved in water. At the time of creation, the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Shiva the concluder, and Vishnu the sustainer, had all emerged from the Viraat Purush. According to Purans, this Viraat and Lord Vishnu are the same divine factors of creation. The subtler form is known as Viraat, while its more grosser form is Vishnu—though the terms 'subtle and gross' are only relative and for the purpose of understanding, because both are the same indivisible Brahm who is non-dual and immutable.

²Sage Balaki had learned from the scriptures that the *Aditya* is a God. There are twelve Adityas who are the mythological Suns and appear as patron Gods who (i) take care of the world (Rig Veda, 2/27/4); are like the heads (Taiteriy Brahmin, 1/2/3/3) and eyes (Jaimini, Uttar. 2/1/2/3) of all the creatures. These twelve Adityas appear first in the Rig Veda 1/41/4-6 and 2/27. They are the sons of Aditi, the mother of Gods (Atharva Veda, 8/9/21). They are the following— the eight Vasus + Indra + Sun + Vishnu + Shiva = twelve in number. According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/5, the twelve months of the year represent these twelve Adityas, one month for one Aditya.

According to Vishnu Puran, the twelve Adityas are the following— Dhata (धाता), Arayma (अर्यमा), Mitra (मित्र), Varun (वरुण), Ansha (अंश), Bhug (भृग), Indra (इन्द्र), Vivaswan (विवस्वान), Pusha (पूषा), Parjanya (पर्जन्य), Twashta (त्वष्टा) and Vishnu (विष्णु).

(b) Sun God or Surya—appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/50. He is one of the chief Gods that sustain life. He is closely related to the Fire God; the Sun is a visible manifestation of the fire element. The sun is regarded as the 'eye' of the Viraat Purush. The Sun God watched the deeds done by all the creatures (Rig Veda, 1/50/2). It is like the Atma of all the creatures (Rig Veda, 1/115/1; Shatpath Brahmin, 14/3/2/9).

'Aditya' or the Sun God appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/41/4-6; 2/27; 8/47/14-18; 10/185; Sam Veda—395; 397; Yajur Veda—23/5; 34/54; Atharva Veda—5/3/9-10; 16/3.

The *Sun* is the visible manifestation of Brahm because it is the most splendid and radiant entity in the visible world which most closely resembles the unique characteristics of Brahm as is evident from the fact that the sun cannot be actually seen by the naked eye because of its brilliance, and it is deduced to be there by inference as its presence is beyond doubt because of its brilliant light that illuminates the entire world. It does not require any proof that it exists. But this sun sets, which is contrary to the virtues of eternity and infinity which Brahm possesses. Therefore, to say that the sun exemplifies Brahm completely is a fallacious proposition.

³The supreme *Brahm* cannot be limited to some far away lifeless entity as the sun and make his presence felt from there as represented by the shining disc of the sun, though the shine, the light and the splendour of the sun are but some of the innumerable qualities of Brahm. Brahm cannot be defined so easily and conclusively as simply saying that it is 'like the sun', and thereby limiting its scope and reach to a particular entity and its realm, such as the sun and its solar system.

Instead of this view, Ajatshatru advocates the holistic view of Brahm which entails that this supreme authority is the unquestioned emperor of all that exists. He wishes to emphasis that the glorious qualities of the sun, that it sustains life in the world by its light, heat and energy, which are to be adored and worshipped in it as manifestations of Brahm rather than its physical structure of a brilliant disc.

The sun is more like the *king* of the realm because it remains far away in the sky but ensures that its light, heat and energy are available to all the creatures equally much like the king who sits in his palace but ensures that all the subjects of his kingdom are well looked after without any distinction whatsoever. As the supreme creator, he rules over his creation even as the emperor rules over his empire. The verdict of the emperor supersedes what others decide on any subject. He is the sovereign of his realm, here referring the entire creation. The emperor and sovereign not only controls everything within his domain but is also the one to whom everything that exists there belongs. Therefore, Brahm also possesses these unique attributes when he is regarded as the supreme emperor of his creation.

The sun is the most splendid entity in the sky, so symbolically it *supersedes* all other celestial bodies in the virtues of being prominent and glorious. Brahm is also the most glorious and splendid power in creation and its authority supersedes all the other lesser authorities such as the various Gods.

The sun shines above the *head* of all the living creatures metaphorically establishing its superiority and exalted stature much like the supreme Brahm. The word 'head' has other connotations also—it is the location of the mind and the intellect of the creature. It is through the hair-like slit in the top of the head, called the Brahm-Randhra that the supreme Brahm had entered the body of the creature at the time of creation and took up his residence in the mind (brain). From there this Brahm controlled the entire functioning of the world represented by the creature. Since the head is the highest point of the body, this word also indicates someone who is most exalted, most senior and superior to others; someone who is more wise, erudite, sagacious, knowledgeable and enlightened than the others. By being the head of the entire creation, Brahm is like the emperor and the citadel of creation.

Previously in Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no.12 it is stated that Aditya or the Sun God symbolises the Mana (mind) and depicts its stupendous qualities. The mind is indeed the most potential factor in creation because it is through the mind that the supreme Brahm had first conceived the creation of this world. All things are conceived and made possible because it is the mind that *enlightens* the creature about the ways to fulfill its dreams. This virtue of the sun of giving or showing light to the creature is a metaphoric way of saying that Brahm enlightens and wisens the creature and removes its ignorance about anything even as the sun shines and shows the world its way out of darkness by its brilliant light.

So king Ajatshatru advocates that one should not merely adore the supreme creator Brahm, who is the ultimate Lord of all that exists, in his visible forms but endeavour to understand his subtle and sublime qualities that make him so adorable, honourable and worthy of worship in the first place.

⁴Only a wise, erudite and learned man who is self-realised and enlightened would have this holistic and all-inclusive view about Brahm. If a wise sage of the stature of Balaki born in the lineage of learned sages

and seers belonging to the clan of the legendary sage Garga is ignorant of Brahm's true identity and definition, then what can be said of ordinary mortals? The word 'head' not only indicates someone who is senior or superior but also who has greater wisdom and erudition amongst his peers. Naturally such men are revered and honoured, and ever word of theirs is kept. Please refer to verse no. 5 of this Brahmin as well as to Canto 5, Brahmin 5, verse no. 2-3; Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 12, 19; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 12 also in this context.]

3. Gargya (Balaki) said again, 'I worship, adore and honour the Purush who is present in the (brilliantly shining) Moon (Chandra)¹ as Brahm²'. [That is, Balaki worshipped Brahm in his visible manifestation in the form of the celestial body known as the Moon in the sky.]

Hearing this, Ajatshatru countered, 'Please do not say this. The great entity known as the Moon is actually the king called Som³ who is cloaked or attired in a white cloth⁴ (representing the bright shine of the moon and the excellent glories of Brahm that this king Som represents).

I worship, adore and honour it with this firm conviction, belief and faith. A person who has realised this fact and worships the moon as such always has the benefit of having perpetual prosperity and health. He never has to suffer from dearth of food and drink⁵' (3).

[Note--¹Balaki worshipped the *Chandra* or the Moon God as a physical manifestation of Brahm as described in the scriptures without understanding the import of this statement; without realising what significance the moon has for the rest of the creation and the divine qualities for which it is worshipped as *Brahm*².

Moon God (Chandrama)—appears first in the Rig Veda, 10/85/19). He is the patron God of night. His origin is in the Mana (heart and mind; the emotions and thoughts) of the Parmatma or the supreme Lord (the Viraat Purush or Vishnu) (Yajur Veda, 31/12; Taittiriya Brahmin, 3/10/8/5). His existence depends upon the Sun God. On the dark night, he is supposed to enter the Sun (Aiteriya Brahmin, 8/28). Chandrama is synonymous with Som, the divine elixir and sanctified drink drunk during the religious sacrifices as it gives its drinker peace and a long life (Kaushatiki Brahmin, 16/5; Aiteriya Brahmin, 7/11). He is the controller of seasons and months; he always changes so appear to be like a new born everyday. He gives peace and long life to the 'Stota', the chanter of hymns as prayers (Rig Veda, 10/85/19).

Chandra or the Moon Gods appears in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—10/85/19; Yajur Veda—1/28; Atharva Veda—6/78/1-2; 19/1.

Balaki forgot that the Moon is the patron God of emotions and sentiments (heart), i.e. it represents the virtuous qualities depicted by this heart because at the time of creation the Moon God took up residence in the heart of a man. It is also the visible and glorious manifestation of Pran, the vital winds that inject life in the otherwise gross and dead body of a creature. Besides this, the moon is a pitcher of Som which is the most potent liquid or elixir that provides eternity and bliss to all. The moonlight gives solace and succour to troubled souls which are scorched by the heat of the sun during the day; it is kind of an antidote for the sun. That is why the moon, water and Pran are synonymous with each other—see Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no.13. So the moon should be worshipped and honoured for these subtle, sublime, divine and eclectic qualities

³Traditionally it is held that the moon is the pitcher that holds the ambrosia of eternity and bliss called *Som*. It is the rejuvenating, invigorating, life-sustaining elixir drunk by Gods, and used as a sanctified drink during religious sacrifices. This offering in the fire sacrifice gives sustenance to the Gods. These Gods represent the different powerful forces and powers of Nature. They symbolically reside in the different organs of the body of the creature, controlling their functioning and thereby regulating life in the creation at the micro level, and as the heavenly Gods they control the functioning of Nature at the macro level of creation. These Gods are eternal in the context of the individual creature because the creature has a limited life span which is miniscule in terms of the span of the creation during the currency of which these Gods would live. When these Gods are properly fed and nourished, it is a symbolic way of saying that the vital life-sustaining forces in Nature are working in their prime form, and are robust and healthy. Since the moon is considered a pitcher of *Som*, the God's ambrosia, it is a metaphor for all fundamental qualities or essential elements that can sustain a healthy and vibrant life. Only Brahm has this qualification of being able to maintain a life in creation that is healthy and robust. Therefore the moon is a manifestation of Brahm in the form of *Som*, the elixir of life; Brahm is indeed the elixir of life. Rather, being the supreme authority, Brahm is the 'king' of all the vital functions, all the powerful powers and forces of Nature; Brahm embodies these virtues. The *Som* is a metaphor for these qualities of Brahm, and the moon is an image of that Brahm.

Hence, Balaki's version of worshipping Brahm in the physical structure of the moon, i.e. its lighted, visible disc, was not the correct and holistic approach. Rather, it is the presence of *Som* in the moon that is adorable. So, king Ajatshatru corrected the sage by pointing out this fact. The moon holds importance because it is the pitcher of Amrit or *Som*, and not because it is some shining heavenly body in the sky. This *Som* is to the moon what Brahm is to the creation. If Brahm were to be removed from this creation, the latter would lose all its importance and relevance much like the moon devoid of its *Som*.

Som appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/43/7-9; 1/11. He is the third most important God. *Som* is the personification of those elements that give bliss and happiness as well as bestows eternal life marked by these virtues. It has its origin in the divine creeper called 'Som Lata'; the extract of it is used as a sanctified drink before and during a fire sacrifice. It is rejuvenating and bliss providing, and is known as Amrit. (Yajur Veda, 17/72). It gives eternity to the Gods and is the ambrosia for which the legendary churning of the ocean was done. It is stored in the moon; that is why the latter is also called *Som*. It is the best extract or essence of life giving herbs, and is therefore called the 'king of the vegetable kingdom' (Rig Veda, 9/114/2). He is regarded as the patron God of directions.

Som appears in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—1/43/7-9; 1/91; 3/62/13-15; 7/104/9, 12, 13; 8/48; 10/124/6; Sam Veda—422; Atharva Veda—6/2; 14/1/1-5.

Som is stored in the moon which is often addressed as *Indu*, another name of *Som*—Rig Veda—1/129/6; Atharva Veda—18/3/54.

⁴The brightly shining disc of the moon is likened to the *white cloth* worn by the monarch, the king called *Som* who is a personification of the glorious virtues of Brahm to sustain life, to provide it with bliss, happiness and peace as well as with eternity and prosperity. The bright light that emanates from the moon is the visible manifestation or revelation of the glory, magnificence and majesty of the supreme Brahm

residing in the moon's bosom, and which lends the moon its brilliant luster and beauty, its importance as the pitcher of the ambrosia of life, bliss and eternity.

⁵A wise man who has this level of erudition begins to see life with a different perspective. He does not waste such life-giving liquids as water and other liquid forms indicative of life such as milk. He realises the fact that the moon is the patron God of Pran, the vital wind present as the spark of life in the creature and controlling the various functions of its body, and water is the liquid element that enables the Pran to perform its duties of sustaining life. This is corroborated by the fact that without water being present inside the body of the creature, no food eaten by it can be digested and distributed to all the parts of the body, and neither can it be assimilated for its benefit.

Obviously, a wise person with this erudition is respected in society and the latter takes care of the needs of the former. So he never has to worry for food and drink.]

4. Gargya (Balaki) said to Ajatshatru, 'I worship, admire and honour the Purush present in 'Vidyut'¹ (electric or lightening) as Brahm'. [That is, Balaki worshipped Brahm in the form of the physical revelation of the brilliant streak of lightening and the dazzle of electric.]

Ajatshatru retorted, 'No, don't say such a thing. I worship the electric and lightening as an embodiment and a manifestation of the stupendous, powerful and unmatched factors of creation revealed as the potent, energy, vitality, force, splendour and radiance of electric, collectively called 'Tej', that the supreme Brahm possesses². [That is, the king advocates that it is of paramount importance that one understands the prime virtues of strength, energy and power present in lightening and electric that holds importance for the creation, and then adores these qualities in electric as manifestations of Brahm.]

A person who worships, admires and honours Brahm with this quality or virtue of Tej as depicted by the electric and lightening (i.e. Brahm in the form of the visible manifestation of these virtues as depicted in the form of stupendous potentials displayed by the electric or lightening), becomes full of Tej himself (i.e. he symbolically possesses and displays the energy, vitality, potent, power, stamina and radiance that are displayed by the electric and lightening; he becomes as powerful, invincible, forceful, effective, vigorous, potent and glorious like the electric and the lightening). Not only he, but even his offspring, his descendents, his heirs etc. also acquire these magnificent virtues and qualities³ (4).

[Note—¹Balaki worships *Vidyut* (electric or lightening) as Brahm because they are visible manifestations of Brahm. He has learnt from the scriptures that Brahm has a dazzling splendour and is the most powerful force in creation. So when he observed lightening streaking across the sky during thunderstorms, or when it strikes as the bolt of electric, he thought to himself that it was Brahm revealing himself to him. But this was a fallacious notion because he worshipped merely the physical characteristic of lightening as a manifestation of the supreme Brahm without understanding the wider implications of what this lightening and its electric power imply.

Vidyut appears as a deity in Atharva Veda as Electric personified as a God—This God has been elaborately described as having the following three characteristics—(a) one that thunders; (b) one that strikes anything to reduce it to ashes; and (c) one which shines with a blinding brilliance that is dazzling and splendourous. Atharva Veda—1/13; 3/21; 7/12; 11/4.

²The king does not agree with this view because he worships the inherent virtues of *Tej* or glorious radiance, splendour, energy, heat and fire as well as the stupendous powers and potentials associated with them that are inherently present in the electric and lightening as manifestations of Brahm, rather than their mere physical existence in creation as being one of the innumerable varied manifestations of Brahm. He adores the extremely powerful force and the stupendous punch of energy and heat that is inherently and intrinsically present in these entities as evidence of the glories and virtues of the supreme Brahm. These stupendous powers and potentials of Brahm are nowhere more evident in this creation than when displayed in the potentials of the electric or the lightening. So instead of worshipping or honouring their physical existential form as a manifestation of Brahm as espoused by Balaki, the king says that the vital and essential qualities displayed by electric and lightening are the real things that are to be honoured in them.

That is, the virtue of possessing immense punch and force in the form of *electric power and energy* that has magnificent potentials for the creation is what is worth honouring and adoring in the electric and lightening instead of their mere physical existence in the clouds as lightening and as the bolt of electric when the lightening strikes the earth.

³The king essentially emphasises that a person who honours the qualities of energy and powers of Nature as being true manifestations of Brahm has realised why Brahm is praised everywhere. It is obvious that immense energy, vitality, stamina, force and power as depicted by electric and lightening are very important ingredients for not only initiating creation but more importantly sustaining it, because every action, every deed, every movement and every developmental exercise needs these virtues. The creation just cannot do without the qualities collectively called *Tej*. Naturally then, such men who are learned about this aspect of creation would be respected by the society.

Further, they would know the importance of preserving energy and vitality. They would not fritter away their own stamina in futile exercises, and instead concentrate their energy in some constructive exercise. This would naturally make them honourable in the world.]

5. Gargya (Balaki) said once again, ‘I worship, adore and honour the supreme Brahm as the Purush who is invisibly present in the ‘Akash’ or the sky’¹. [That is, Balaki worships some abstract entity as God who is located hypothetically somewhere in the sky representing the heavens.]

At this, Ajatshatru rebuked him, saying, ‘No, don’t talk about it. I regard that entity as complete, infinite and wholesome, as well as unchangeable, immutable and indivisible. I worship it with these virtues’².

A person who knows about these excellent, grand, esoteric, sublime and eclectic virtues and attributes of the sky element and then worships, adores and honours it as the representative of supreme transcendental enigmatic Brahm, then such a person is blessed with good and compatible

subjects (such as obedient and intelligent sons, family, friends, relatives, kith and kin) as well as with abundant livestock³.

They never come to decay and destruction; they never perish but go on perpetuating themselves; they never diminish in number, strength, vigour, vitality, stamina, powers and potentials. In short, a person who realises the supremacy and the immense virtues of the transcendental infinite Brahm with all its virtues and potentials represented by the sky is blessed with a happy life⁴ (5).

[Note—¹Sage Balaki worships and honours Brahm as the sky or *Akash* because he has learnt that he resides in the heavens called Brahm Loka, and the Brahm Loka is located in the sky. He has also learnt that he is invisible and out of reach like the sky, and he covers the whole world like the sky covering the earth. Balaki does not understand the subtle meaning when the scriptures say that Brahm should be worshipped and adored as the sky. It is not the physical sky as we see above our heads that is the abode of any God known as Brahm. It is subtle and sublime 'qualities and attributes' of the sky element that are worth worshipping and adoring.

²That is, Ajatshatru regarded Brahm to be equivalent to the *sky element* because Brahm inter alia possesses all such qualities as possessed by the sky. Some of these virtues of the sky are its characteristic features of vastness, infinity, immutability and indivisibility, of having an infinite, fathomless and endless dimension, of being all-pervading and all-encompassing, of being basically disassociated from everything that is present in its bosom and remaining pure inspite of their presence in the bottomless bowls of the sky.

For example, the sky has so many things present in it, such as the numerous celestial bodies, the cosmic debris, the sky-borne creatures such as the birds, the various impurities such as dust and gases etc., but it remains inherently pure and uncorrupted by them. We observe that sometime the sky is overcast by a dense bank of dark clouds and at other times the same patch of sky appears to display the colours of the rainbow. These are illusions that cast their impression upon the otherwise pure and incorruptible sky. The sky is pristine pure, uncorrupt, without any taints and faults. It is all encompassing and it pervades uniformly wherever there is Space. Everything that exists must exist in the space known as the sky. Even the earth, the moon and the sun dangle in the vacant space of the celestial sky. All solids, gases, vapours, liquids and semisolids exist within the space of the sky. There is nothing beyond the periphery of the sky.

The sky is one complete whole, and everything that came into being in the beginning was conceived in its bosom, and all that exist today are also present in the space of the sky which resembles the cosmic womb as well as the cosmic receptacle. Nothing exists outside its periphery.

According to Vedanta, the concept of the sky or Akash has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are *five subtle skies* representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or 'Koshas' present in the body of a creature.. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intelluctual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Ref.-- Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

According to other metaphysical concepts, there are *ten subtle skies*. They are the following:--(1) Ghataakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash—the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash—the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash—the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash—the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the quintessential cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the inter-galactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called ‘Swarga’ which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

There is a verse in Paingalo-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, canto 4, verse nos.19-20 states that Brahm is like Akash.

Hence, basically the king extols the grand virtues of the *sky element* and worships and adores *Brahm* with these qualities and characteristics.

³All his dependants are called his *subjects* to highlight the fact that his position and stature in society is no less than a king as mentioned in verse no.2. His position in society is similar to Prajapati, the grandfather patriarch of creation who is respected by his subjects.

⁴Being wise and enlightened, he would have realised that the sky has certain glorious attributes—such as being endless, infinite, fathomless, all-incorporating, all-pervading, all-encompassing, incorruptible, taint-free, colourless etc. The Brahm that such a wise man praises also has all these attributes possessed by the sky, amongst his other divine attributes. The sky accepts everything but never rejects anything. Such a worshipper of Brahm respects all the sacrosanct laws of Nature and never violates them or exploits them for his own vested and short-term gains. His example would be followed by his heirs also, so that the society would be not only happy but never have to suffer dearth of any natural resources.]

6. Gargya (Balaki) continued with his version of how he worships Brahm and in which form. He said, ‘I worship, admire and honour Brahm as the Purush who is present in the wind or air element known as Vayu¹’. [That

is, Balaki worships Brahm as one God who is known as the Wind God. The Wind God is called Purush because all Gods are males.]

At this, king Ajatshatru snubbed him, saying, 'No, no sage, don't say this. I worship, adore and honour this Vayu (wind/air element) as Indra², Vaikunth³, and as Aparajit⁴. [That is, the king admonishes Balaki for worshipping Brahm without understanding the vital principles that define the wind or air element. The king holds the view that more than an abstract entity known as Vayu God, the wind or air element should be worshipped because they exhibit some of the grand characteristics and virtues of Brahm.]

A person who worships Vayu as Brahm having these characteristics, attributes and virtues, becomes famous and victorious; he becomes invincible and a conqueror of his enemies⁵ (6).

[Note—¹Balaki has learnt that there is one God known as *Vayu*, and since all the Gods are manifestations of the supreme Brahm, therefore he says that he worships and honours the latter in his form of the former. But this is an incomplete view by which Brahm should be worshipped. The reason is cited below.

The word Vayu refers to the *air or wind element* of creation which is synonymous with Pran or *life-principle* in a creature. This wind/air pervades through the length and breadth of the sky and the creation. Without the presence of wind/air, life is impossible because the man would not be able to breathe. The wind/air is present at two levels—at the macro level it pervades through the creation as one of the five vital elements that harbour and sustain life (the others being sky, water, fire and earth), and at the micro level of the individual creature it is present as its very life in the form of breath and other vital winds present inside the body that govern each and every function carried out by the body. The wind element present inside the body of the creature is called its 'Pran' because it helps to sustain life inside the body.

Vayu or the Wind God appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/2/1-3; 1/134; 4/46/1; 7/90/1-4; 8/26/20-25; Sam Veda—600; Yajur Veda—7/7; 14/12; Atharva Veda—6/10/2.

According to various Upanishads, especially the Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5 and 2/77-87, as well as Paingalo-panishad, cantos 2, verse nos.3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, this vital wind is of ten types depending upon the function that the wind element performs in the body of a creature. Amongst them, there are five winds which are considered more important than the rest. As such, these five are called the main 'Pran', or 'Panch Prans', and they are the following :--(1) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) Apaana, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) Samaana, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (4) Udaana, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) Vyana, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

Besides the above five winds, there are five subsidiary winds which act more like assistants to the chief winds. They are-- (1) Naag—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching; (2) Kurma—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut; (3) Krikar—this creates the sensation of hunger; (4) Devdutta—this creates sleep; and (5) Dhananjay—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

According to Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, these ten winds have the following functions—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Saman—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

Location of the five chief vital winds, called the Panch Prans, in the body—(1) Pran—it is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg; (2) Apaana—it is present in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees; (3) Saman—it is uniformly present throughout the body; (4) Udaan—it is present in the hands, legs, joints of the body; and (5) Vyan—it is located in the ears, thighs, waist, heels, shoulders, throat. The subsidiary winds as listed above, i.e. Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay are located in the skin, muscles and the bones.

Besides the Upanishad mentioned above, there are others that elaborately describe the vital winds, their locations, their functions and their significance, and the chief amongst them are (1) Chandogya Upanishad in its canto 3, sections 13-18, and canto 7, section 15, (2) Jabal Darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.23-24 of the Sam Veda tradition, (3) Maitrayanu Upanishad, canto 2, verse no.7 of the same Veda (which describes the functions of these winds), (4) Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14, and (5) Paingalo-upanishad, canto 2, verse no.3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. These vital winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas’ Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.

All these forms of the wind are equally vital and precious for the creation and its creatures. That is why they are synonymous with life in creation, or they are the de facto *Pran* of creation. There is no distinction between the one and the other as to their importance as well as to the extent *Brahm* is present in them. We cannot start the counting from any particular entity say the Pran wind as being number one and more important than any other forms of the wind/air element.

²The word *Indra* refers to the God who derives his name from ‘Indri’ meaning the sense organs of the body—five organs of perception and five organs of action. The vital functions and the virtues of each of these organs are personified as a God, and the authority who controls them is their Lord called Indra. Indra is a metaphor for, or a personification of the combined virtues and characteristics that define all these organs and

their functioning. Being at the helm of affairs, Indra is like the King or Emperor of all the other personified forces and powers of creation.

At the macro level of creation he is like the supreme *Brahm* who is the Lord of all that exists, while at the micro level of the individual creature he is like the *Atma* (pure consciousness) and the *Pran* (the vital winds that sustain life inside the body).

The various functions that the organs perform inside the body of the creature are represented by their own set of patron Gods who personify these functions and the various qualities of these individual organs. Since *Pran*, the vital winds present in the body that govern its functioning, is at the core of life in a creature's body, it is like Indra at the micro level. Since the heart is at the core of life of a man, the central authority that regulates all these Gods is also said to have its seat in the heart. That authority is the emperor of the body and its organs, and it is known as the *Atma*. Therefore, this *Atma* is also like Indra as far as the individual creature is concerned.

According to this verse, Indra is a synonym for *Brahm*, both at the macro level because *Brahm* is the supreme Lord of the entire creation represented by the innumerable forces of Nature called the various Gods at the macro level (and that is why we have so many Gods), as well as at the micro level of the individual creature because the *Pran* is the vital life supporting entity present in the body without which none of the organs would have their relevance, as well as the *Atma* or pure consciousness without which even this *Pran* would lose its relevance.

The king is offered the best of foods and drinks that are available in his kingdom. So this Indra God is also offered the best food and drink in the form of the ambrosia called 'Som'. It is an invigorating drink that is extracted from a creeper by the same name. It is used during sacrificial rituals, and it is offered to Gods that is supposed to bestow them with an eternal life of bliss. It is said to be stored in the heavenly pitcher of the moon. From the metaphysical point of view, since Indra represents the superior authority that controls all the other Gods representing the various sense organs, it follows that whatever the organs acquire are first offered to Indra before the other Gods representing these organs partake of it. Amongst the organs, it is the hand that helps the body to acquire things from the outside world. Since the organs have an intrinsic tendency to move towards pleasing things in this world and move away from unpleasant things, it is deemed that their messenger, the hand, brings to them only selected and best of things available, which is like bringing Amrit or Som for them so that they can offer it to their king Indra. Refer verse no. 3 in this context.

Indra in the present context is also the *Atma* because the latter is the undisputed emperor of the body as its consciousness, as well as the *Pran* because it is the king of the body as the vital winds that sustain life. According to the Rig Veda, 1/ 4-5; 51-57, Indra represents the combined forces of Nature represented by the different Gods. He loves to drink Som, the elixir of bliss and eternity (Rig Veda, 3/ 36/ 8). He has the Wind God called Marut as his chief assistant.

It has already been said earlier that *Pran* (one of the vital winds known as breath, and which is the most important factor to infuse life into a creature and maintain that life) is the supreme and the most exalted amongst all the Gods of the sense organs—see canto 1, Brahmin 3, and Brahmin 5, verse no. 3-10, 20. Hence, this *Pran* is like the king called Indra amongst the horde of Gods representing the various sense organs of the body.

Indra, the king of Gods, appears in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—1/4-5, 51-57; 5/29; 7/19-32; 8/15-17; 10/111-113; Sam Veda—52/115-148 etc.; Yajur Veda—3/34; 7/5; 7/39; Atharva Veda—8/8; 20/1.

³The word *Vaikunth* has two parts— ‘Vai’ is a prefix meaning ‘without, lacking’, and ‘Kunth’ means ‘blunt, dull, foolish, silly, stupid, not effective’. Hence the word, *Vaikunth* means that entity or place which is ‘not blunt or dull’ or ‘not foolish and stupid’, or in other words ‘that which is forceful, powerful, potent, majestic, effective and a residence of an entity that is intelligent, wise and erudite’. Obviously, wind and air both possess these virtues. The wind is a very forceful entity in creation as is evident during fierce storms; it is so powerful and authoritative that it can even subdue its nearest rival the fire element by being able to put out even a fiercely burning fire; it is a life-infusing force as is evident from the fact that the vital winds present in the body as described above are all equally necessary for sustaining life in the body of a creature; it has esoteric and enigmatic virtues which are often incredulous and opposite to each other—for example it can extinguish fire and at the same time it is invariably needed to kindle one, it can arouse even the normally docile water element as is evident during hurricanes in high seas when huge waves rise which can even capsize ships and sweep inland to swamp large tracts of land and cause havoc. The wind/air element is all-pervading as it is present throughout the sky; it is more powerful than the fire element because it can extinguish it; it is the air and wind that lifts water as vapour and helps its transformation into clouds that rain the much needed elixir of life as rain; it is the air that packs all the available space in sky that helps the earth and other planets to ‘float’ in the sky.

⁴At the celestial level, this wind/air has a divine form known as Marut or Wind God. There are forty nine Maruts* who are like commanders of the entire wind force that operates in creation, and therefore these wind forces led by Marut are called an ‘army’. Since this army of the various forms of wind/air is invincible, it is called *Aparaajit*, literally meaning someone who cannot be defeated. Here this word refers to the powerful forces of wind in creation that has made it an invincible and formidable power to reckon with, a force that cannot be defeated and conquered. It can never be subdued and made subservient.

*The forty nine Maruts are the Wind Gods mentioned in Rig Veda, 1/37-39 and 1/165/3, 5, 7, 9. They are regarded variously as — (i) sons of Indra and Vrishni (Rig Veda, 2/34/2), (ii) Sons of Rudra (Rig Veda, 2/33/1), (iii) similar to the Fire-God (Rig Veda, 6/66/2), and (vi) Indra God (Rig Veda, 1/165, 171). The Purans call them sons of sage Kashyap and Diti.

(b). Wind God (Vayu or Anil)—appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/2/1-3; 1/134. The ‘vital air or wind element’ was created from the Pran or the vital life-sustaining vitality of the creator Prajapati Brahma (Rig Veda, 10/90/13). He is regarded as the Atma of all the Gods (Shathpath Brahmin, 9/1/2/38). He bestows immortality to the Gods and other exalted souls who are able to please and control him (Rig Veda, 10/186/3). He has the fastest speed amongst the Gods (Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/8/7/1). He moves in an oblique line (and not straight) (Jaimini Brahmin, 3/3/10).

Since Brahm has wind or air as one of its various manifestations besides the other elements of creation as listed step-by-step in this Brahmin no. 1, the former possesses all the attributes of the latter, though the latter might not possess all the virtues of the former. In other

words, Brahm has produced the air or wind element as one of its varied forms, exhibiting some of its varied qualities or characteristics. Therefore, the air or wind element possesses some of the qualities or virtues of Brahm, but not all of them, for Brahm is much superior to air or wind element and has a greater role to play than the limited role of the latter.

To worship the wind or air as having some of the unique attributes of Brahm is what Ajatshatru proposes, while sage Balaki emphasised the concept of Brahm being manifested in the gross body of the Wind God. Balaki praises the subtle, sublime form of wind which is invisible, while the king praises its great attributes and majestic powers, its forceful authority and life giving and sustaining qualities, and its powerful, energetic and vigorous form.

⁵A person who respects Brahm with the majestic virtues of the wind/air element is able to exercise self restraint over his own self and his sense organs. Such a person is able to conquer all temptations and other allurements that are like formidable enemies for his soul, for this materialistic world is like a trap that ties a creature perpetually in its snare. According to Upanishads dealing with Yoga (meditation), the vital winds in the body can be controlled by a number of exercises, the chief amongst them being Pranayam, along with many sitting postures called the various Asaans. It has been said that an ascetic who does them acquires certain stupendous mystical powers called Siddhis that are esoteric and mysterious. By the virtue of possessing these potentials he is feared by all and no one dares to challenge him.]

7. Sage Gargya (Balaki) said, 'I worship that Brahm as the Purush present in the fire element called Agni¹'. [That is, Balaki worshipped and honoured Fire God as representing the personification of the strength and energy of Brahm.]

King Ajatshatru chided him and retorted, 'No sage, do not say such a thing. I worship, adore and honour Brahm as 'Vishaasahi²' (one who tolerates and accepts everything).

A person who knows this mystery about the fire element also acquires this grand virtue, and even his subjects or dependants are also endowed with it³ (7).

[Note—¹Balaki says essentially that he worships the *Agni* or the Fire God as a personification of the qualities of possessing immense strength and energy that are possessed by Brahm because the fire can burn everything and is the most fearsome element in creation. Everyone respects and fears the Fire God because of his immense ability to burn all to cinders if he gets annoyed.

Agni or the Fire God first appears in Rig Veda—1/1, 12/1-122. Since it was the first born God, it was called 'Agni' meaning the one who comes first, that which preceedes. He is the foremost amongst the Gods worshipped on earth (Shatpath Brahmin, 6/1/1/11). He is compared to the Sun in the heavens. He has seven tongues representing the seven colours of the rays of the Sun or the colours of light (Rig Veda, 1/146/1; 3/6/2). Since he provides nourishment to the Gods by accepting the offerings made to the sacrificial fire at the time of fire sacrifices, he is deemed to be their sustainer and father (Rig Veda, 1/69/1). Other names of the Fire God called Agni or Agne are the following—Vishwavedus, Kavi, Kavikratu, Jaatvedus, Vaishwaanar, Tanunpat, Matrishwa and Naraashansa. It is believed that he was born from the mouth of the Virrat Purush (Rig Veda 10/90/13).

The Fire God or *Agni* appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/1; 1/12; 5/1; 7/1, 3, 4, 12; 8/1, 23, 39; 10/1-7; Sam Veda—1-51; 53-55 etc.; Yajur Veda—1/5; 2/4; Atharva Veda—8/3; 12/3.

²The king was not satisfied, and he said that it was not the reason why he worships Fire as Brahm. He says that the fire has the especial quality known as *Vishaasahi*. It means that it accepts anything and everything offered to it with equanimity and fortitude without distinguishing between them. Even rubbish and inauspicious things are accepted by it (as is evident from the fact that we burn garbage in the fire) with the same level of acceptance as it accepts holy offerings meant for the Gods (as during fire sacrifices). The only difference is that the fire burns to ashes things that are inauspicious such as garbage, and transfers to the Gods things offered to it that are auspicious as the offerings during sacrificial rituals.

This quality of equanimity and tolerance, of fortitude and magnanimity are the hallmark virtues of Brahm, and he is praised for it. Even as no one fears his parent, no one needs to fear Brahm who is the cosmic parent of the entire creation. He accepts the bad as well as the good with equal level of acceptance.

Meanwhile, the celestial Fire God is also called the 'Vaishwanar Fire'. It appears first in Rig Veda, 4/5, 6/7-9. It is the inherent 'fire' element present in all the living creatures that distinguish them from non-living creatures. It is all-pervading and omnipresent, and infuses life to all the creatures (Kaushatiki Brahmin, 4/3). This fire helps in digestion of food (Shatpath Brahmin, 148/10/1). There are three legendary fires—viz. the 'Agni', which is the terrestrial fire on earth represented by the word Bhu, the 'Jatvedas', which is the fire of the sky represented by the word Bhuvaha, and 'Vaishwanar', which is the fire of the heavens represented by the word Swaha (Brihaddevtakaar, 1/67). The term appears in the Rig Veda approx. sixty times.

According to the Upanishads, there are five Holy Fires—(elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13) (a) 'Garhyapatya' (गार्हपत्य—the fire of the household hearth), (b) 'Dakshinagni' (दक्षिणाग्नि—the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) 'Ahavaniya' (आहवनीय—the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) 'Sabhya' (सभ्य—the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) 'Awasathya' (आवसथ्य—the fire of the later Smriti period). Worship of the three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 2, section 24, while canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

Garhyapatya fire—This is the householder's fire. A householder has land and farm representing 'earth' in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire place in the house. Hence, the Garhyapatya fire, or the householder's fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these four entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the 'fire element' because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise the creature who eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The Dakshinagni fire-- is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest for of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the

person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

The Ahawaniya fire-- is lit to invoke Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The 'electric' is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possess most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

The following are also regarded as the five fires— (i) Sun, (ii) Lightning, (iii) Terrestrial fire, (iv) Master or Lord of the household and (v) Chief priest.

³A tolerant person is always respected by all; he welcomes everyone. Therefore, a man who adores this tolerant and accepting virtue of the Fire, inculcates this virtue in himself, and becomes tolerant and accepting, magnanimous and gracious like the fire. No one fears him, no matter how powerful and highly placed he is. This is because a man endeavours to inculcate and mimic the qualities of the iconic deity that he adores and honours, which in this case is the fire element. Those who follow him, such as his dependents and heirs, also emulate him.]

8. Then sage (Balaki) Gargya said again, 'I worship, admire and honour that Purush who is present as Apaha¹ (water) as Brahm'. [That is, Balaki worships Brahm as the Water God as he has learned about him from the scriptures. But this is not the complete picture of Brahm.]

Ajatshatru objected, saying, 'No, do not say this thing about Brahm. I regard the water element as an image of Brahm and worship it as such. I worship, admire and honour this water as a 'Pratirup²' (i.e. as an image) of Brahm. [That is, the king tells Balaki that water should be admired for certain of its qualities which reflect the eclectic and sublime qualities and attributes of Brahm, and not because it is some abstract God mentioned in some scriptures.]

A person who worships, adores and admires water as an image (Pratirup) of Brahm never finds anyone who is opposed to him, or is not compatible or obedient to him. He always finds favourable circumstances. Even his own creations or productions (i.e. his offspring, the son who is born to him and his family) are also favourable for him³ (8).

[Note—¹Balaki worshipped Brahm as the Water God known as *Apaha*. The word Aapo or Apaha refers to the water as flowing in a river, as clouds and as any fluid. It has been deified in the Rig Veda, 1/23/16-22. He is the patron God of 'water on the move' or flowing water, such as rivers, rain, clouds etc. There are four Sukts devoted to him in Rig Veda—7/47; 7/49; 10/9; and 10/14. 'Aapo' is synonymous with Pran or life giving vitality; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life (Shathpath Brahmin, 3/8/2/4).

Apaha, as water personified as a God, appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/23/16-22; 4/58; 7/47, 49; 10/9; Yajur Veda—2/34; 4/12; Atharva Veda—1/4-6; 18/3/56.

(b). *Parjanya*—appears in the Rig Veda, 1/164/51. This God is responsible for rains and life on the earth; he is regarded as one of the forms of the Wind God (Atharva Veda, 4/15/1).

(c). *Varun* is the Water God—he appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/25; 2/28. He is the patron God of water (Gopath Brahmin, 1/1/7). He is regarded as the king amongst the Gods (Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/1/2/7). He is the lord of all the Bhuvans or abodes (Rig Veda, 5/85/3). He is regarded as the patron God of the night (Atharva Veda, 9/3/18).

Broadly speaking, this Varun is honoured, inter alia, in-- Rig Veda—1/25; 2/28; 5/85; 7/86-89; 8/41; 10/124/5, 7, 8; Sam Veda—589; Yajur Veda—4/31; 10/7; Atharva Veda—5/1-2; 20/92.

²The king stresses the point that merely worshipping *water as God* as described in the scriptures as noted above is not the proper understanding of why water represents Brahm. Water is the basic building block of life and the most essential ingredient needed to conceive and sustain life of all forms. Without water in any form, life is impossible to imagine. Even the primary cosmic gel was in a fluid or jelly form as represented by the male semen and its female counterpart the ova. The blood that takes the nourishment of food to all parts of the body is also water based, as are the various enzymes, the hormones and other chemicals in the body. Water is needed for the food to grow, to cook it, to make it digestible and made useful for the creature's life. Life not only on earth but anywhere else is just not imaginable without water, and that is why scientists search for rudimentary traces of water when they look for life in the universe.

Water has some unique qualities not possessed by other elements in creation. For example, water can exist in all the three states of existence—viz. gas, liquid and solid as vapour, fluid and ice respectively. Water vapour is invisible like Brahm; liquid water is visible and flows through the world as rivers and other water bodies which are life sustaining as much as in all the living beings as their life-giving blood and other essential fluids, besides its importance as the medium through which food is produced, prepared for eating, eaten, digested and then distributed uniformly in and assimilated by the body; and finally as ice which is the basic form of the glaciers that source the water supply of the great river systems of the world. All these characteristics are also unique to Brahm—this supreme entity is also invisible like the water vapour, is visible, mobile and flowing in the form of vibrant life as liquid water symbolising those creatures that move, e.g. the members of the animal kingdom, and is present even in apparently grosser and denser form as glaciers or ice which symbolically represent the immobile members of the creation such as trees that have a thick bark as well as fungi, algae and all other forms of the plant kingdom. In short, Brahm's sublime, esoteric and enigmatic qualities and attributes are best exemplified by the water element than any other single entity.

In this context it should be noted that water is the fluid in which life is conceived as is evident in the fluidity of the semen and the vaginal fluids without which conception of a creature in the mother's womb is not possible. Water is needed by the embryo to draw nourishment from the mother, and even by the child when it suckles milk after it is born; this water is needed by the child for its growth and development. And it is in water that the world would finally plunge and submerge itself at the time of doomsday deluge. New life would again emerge from this very water in which the world had collapsed.

So the king emphasises that Brahm should not simply be worshipped as some abstract God called Apaha or Varun as mentioned in the scriptures, but as the glorious

virtues and stupendous qualities displayed by the water element vis-à-vis life in the creation, a point missed by Balaki.

Therefore it is most important to realise that water is deified because of its sublime eclectic qualities that resemble the stupendous and majestic virtues of life in this creation and its sustenance as shown by Brahm. That is why water is the *Pratirup* of Brahm. In other words, water is like the image of Brahm; it is the counterpart of Brahm as it presents the perfect picture of the magnificent creative powers of Brahm. It is like a specimen, a model that showcases the glorious virtues of Brahm.

³That is, since all the creatures in this creation are an image of Brahm, are a true reflection of their principal source known as Brahm, since Brahm has merged himself uniformly in this creation as its Atma (consciousness) and Pran (life) and pervades equally throughout its length and breadth, since nothing that has come into existence is free of Brahma because nothing can exist without it even as an image can't be formed of something that does not exist, it follows that everything is like the reflection of Brahm in the water element. In this sense, water is like a mirror that reflects the glories of Brahm.

Therefore, it is natural that a wise person who is enlightened enough to realise the fact that the water element reflects some of the magnificent qualities and virtues of Brahm from whom it has emerged in the beginning of the creation, that it is an image or a reflection of its primary source from which it has come into being in the first place at the time of creation, that water is a specimen model of the glorious and unique qualities of the supreme transcendental Brahm—such a person will have that spiritual elevation to realise that he *himself* is also a corresponding image of the supreme Brahm like the water element. In fact it is true because the major part of our body is made up of water, such as the blood, mucous, saliva, hormones, enzymes, urine, lymph and other such elements that are not solid like the bones. Metaphorically speaking therefore, our body is truly an image of Brahm; it is indeed a *Pratirup* or an image or a counterpart picture of Brahm. Since the offspring (son) will obviously be like the parent, it follows that he would be also an image of Brahm.

With Brahm as his ideal and the target of his knowledge and research, such a person would strive to attain and emulate the noble virtues exhibited by Brahm. When successful, he would have attained his own corresponding image in the form of Brahm. And since Brahm is the supreme authority of creation, possessing stupendous powers in all the spheres, the person also acquires corresponding potentials himself. The circle would have made a complete turn, as it were, reaching the point from where it had started out.

Such a person never finds or faces any 'adverse image', i.e. or an opponent or a person who is averse to him or inimical to him. He has sons who are his image, i.e. his sons follow his footsteps, are obedient to him and are disciplined as well as compatible to him. They are wise, erudite, intelligent and sagacious like their father. They are not wayward and useless for the society. The concept of 'image' becomes clear in the next verse.]

9. Gargya Balaki said, 'I treat the Purush in the mirror as an image or reflection of Brahm, and I worship, adore and honour it (i.e. the image in the mirror) as such¹'.

Ajatshatru objected and said, 'No sage, don't say such a thing about Brahm. I treat it as the glorious, radiant, glittering, pure, untainted and splendorous form, called 'Rochishnu', of the original entity reflected in the mirror which is worthy of worshipping, admiring, revering and honouring².

A person who worships these virtues in it is blessed with the glory, radiance, splendour, magnificence, purity, divinity and holiness possessed by Brahm. His subjects (i.e. his dependants and descendants), such as his sons, family, kith and kin as well as his compatriots are all blessed with these virtues. Those who come in contact with them, or wherever they go, all such people also bask in their glory; they also get illuminated by the radiance effusing from them³ (9).

[Note—¹The *image seen in a mirror* is a reflection of the original, complete with all the finery, splendour and grandeur of the principal. But it cannot replace the original entity; the image might be an undistorted and truthful depiction of the original thing but to say that the original thing is 'present' in the mirror itself is a very ignorant and foolish proposition. So when Balaki said that he worshipped Brahm as his image observed in a mirror, he was referring to the visible world which is an image of that Supreme Being. But the pitfall here is that it is 'not' the original entity that is being worshipped, because worshipping is offered to the principal and not to its representative or image.

Further, a man is considered an image of Brahm. In fact, he is a manifestation of Brahm with a 'gross body'. It is this gross body that appears in the mirror, and not the 'true self', the Atma, which is in fact is Brahm personified and it cannot be seen in any mirror because it is an invisible 'spirit'. So the problem with worshipping Brahm as his image in the mirror as proposed by Balaki is that the image (gross body) is being worshipped, and not the principal (the Atma) because the latter does not form an image.

²The king finds fault with Balaki precisely for this reason. The king says that the persona behind that image is the glorious divinity with a splendorous glow of holiness and a radiant brilliance of consciousness bubbling over with life elements. It is therefore the elementary virtue of *Rochishnu*, or of the matchless splendour, divine radiance, stupendous magnificence and other glorious qualities and versatile attributes of the supreme Brahm exhibited in his image that are worthy of honouring and worshipping. That principal entity whose image is seen in the mirror of this world is the supreme transcendental sublime Brahm resident as the glorious Atma (pure consciousness) as well as the essential Pran (life) of creation. It is not drab and lifeless as an image of the mirror, but vibrant and colourful and full of verve and essence.

³Only a clean mirror with a perfect face can reflect a perfect image, an image which is not distorted or faded. The mirror is like the heart, and that which is reflected from it is the supreme Brahm. The cleaner and purer the heart is, the more clean and pure and untainted and undistorted the image will be. When the sun is reflected from a clean mirror, the image is as blinding and dazzling as the original sun in the sky so much so that no one can see its image in the mirror. If the mirror is held in front of a wall, the light of the sun is cast on the wall but shaped in the shape of the mirror. If the mirror is square, then this patch of light would also be square though the disc of the sun is round. The man in whose pure and untainted heart the image of Brahm has appeared, i.e. the man who has become self-realised and enlightened about the essential meaning of his Atma and its broad ramifications, too becomes an

embodiment of the supreme Brahm whose image that Atma is. As a result, such wise and realised men reflect the same divinity and holiness as effusing from Brahm. Therefore, they too become radiant and glorious themselves. Naturally, the divine light effusing and radiating from their Atma illuminates not only their inner self but also the surroundings. That is, those who come in their contact inculcate noble virtues exhibited by them. But it must be remembered that the glory of a holy man is but a 'reflected glory', because his heart acts as a mirror to reflect the virtues of Brahm. Even as no one can know the actual shape of the sun by observing the patch of light on the wall after the sun's rays bounce off the mirror, no one can know what or who Brahm is except by contemplation and self-realisation.

This in essence is what is meant here. Those people who have the good fortune of having communion with such self-realised persons become as good as they are because it is an established fact that one becomes like the company one keeps.]

10. Gargya (Balaki) said, 'The sound that is produced in the wake of anyone passing away from a place¹, I worship it as Brahm'.

Ajatshatru corrected him by saying, 'Please do not say so. I worship, adore and honour Brahm in the form of the Pran² (the vital wind forces that not only inject life in a creature but also sustain it).

A person who realises this fact and worships (adores and respects) it as such, is able to live a full life till its natural end in this world³. He does not have to die pre-maturely (due to disease, accident etc.) (10).

[Note--¹When something has gone by very swiftly, a subtle sound is produced, such as a swishing sound produced when a sword is swung around, a rustling sound when a snake has passed under dry leaves on the ground, a whistling sound when wind passes through some hole etc., because the air gets disturbed, and the friction between the moving thing and the layers of the air around it causes this sound to make its appearance.

Sound is produced in air, and the sage here means that he praises the wind element which is necessary to produce and propagate the sound, because friction is the cause of the production of sound in the first place, and its propagation is also made possible by the air because sound moves in the form of waves. If there were no air, there would be no medium by which the sound can either be formed or move in the form of waves and be heard.

There is another metaphysical interpretation of this statement of Balaki. When this world comes to an end, i.e. when the hustle and bustle of life ends at the time of its ultimate conclusion at the time of doomsday, what remains is the cosmic sound called Naad by the scriptures. This Naad is represented by the sound of OM that is all-pervading in the entire cosmos, and it represents Brahm. So Balaki worships this eternal sound called Naad heard after the life comes to an end, i.e. after the 'living being has passed away from here'.

But he forgot that what he is essentially worshipping is something that has no relevance to the present life because it exists in the 'wake of someone who has passed away'. So essentially he is worshipping something with a 'historical' perspective rather than something with its 'present and lively' locus standi, something that is 'here and now'.

²King Ajatshatru was not impressed. This is because only a living entity moves and exhibits the energy and vitality which enables it to go

from one place to another so swiftly that the sound can be produced in the event of its swift movement. Life is more relevant than something that has only history and no present. Life and *Pran*, which is the vital wind that supports life in the individual creature, are synonymous with each other. As has been pointed above, sound needs the presence of wind or air element in order to be produced and be propagated. Therefore, the king advocates the understanding of the underlying subtle primary force that makes sound possible instead of just routinely worshipping the latter without having its integrated knowledge.

There is another interpretation of the word 'Pran' vis-à-vis the wind or air element. There are two aspects of this element—one that simply moves in the space of the sky and makes its presence felt by its movement and life-sustaining virtues, and the sound that this movement produces, such as for example the wind that forms into a howling squall, hurricane or a tornado. This latter form of wind/air element might have force and strength of causing destruction, but it does not represent that form of wind/air element that sustains life. Therefore, the difference between the two winds is that the latter is 'lifeless' but the former provides 'life'.

The sage has worshipped wind/air that is merely a sound but has no life element in it, but the wise king honours wind/air element that harbours life in its bowl. The king emphasises that more important than what remains after the creation has passed away, is what is at the present time that makes the creation live and move and carry on with its activities. The king prefers to worship the same wind in its vibrant, vigorous and energetic form that is life-injecting entity called Pran, while sage Balaki wishes to honour wind in the form of the cosmic howl that remains after the creation has ceased to exist. Both Pran and air element are synonyms of Brahm with the difference that latter is relevant only when there is life in this world. Otherwise, it becomes irrelevant. See also verse no. 12 below.

³When a wise man understands the importance of Pran, he would not waste it in futile efforts and instead preserve its stamina and vitality much like a wise man preserving his money and other assets and not willingly frittering them away. So a wise man would not indulge in futile chattering and gossip because they exhaust the vital winds in the body. He would not unduly stress his body so as to give the vital winds that regulate the various functions of the body their due rest. For example, he would eat with restraint so that the vital wind concerned with the entire process is not overstressed; he would practice Yoga exercises, such as Pranayam to regulate and revitalize his wind forces. Naturally therefore the body would be healthy and live long.]

11. Sage Gargya (Balaki) said once again, 'I regard the Purush, who is present in the various directions of the cosmos¹, as Brahm. I adore honour and worship him with this conviction'.

King Ajatshatru retorted by saying, 'Oh no sage, don't say such a thing. I worship, admire and honour Brahm as the non-dual entity that is universal and has no independent, separate and distinct existence in any one particular direction of the cosmos²'.

A person who realises Brahm as such is blessed with faithful and loyal companions who never abandon him, or who cannot be separated from him³ (11).

[Note—¹Sage Balaki's words imply that the Purush or the one whom he worships lives in some far away corner of the various directions of the compass. In other words, there is a distance between the worshipper here and the one who is being worshipped there. This is indeed a fallacious notion as far as Brahm is concerned. Besides this point, there is another angle to it—one worships someone who is superior to himself. For example, one worships a God who is said to live in the heaven high above, i.e. over 'there' implying some direction. But Brahm resides as the Atma of the creature in its own bosom, so worshipping him over 'there' is a fallacious notion. Further, each direction has an independent patron God, i.e. there are as many Gods as there are directions. Balaki worshipped so many Gods and offered his obeisance to them, instead of worshipping one single God who is the Supreme One. This error was corrected by the king.

²That is, the king emphasised that the Brahm whom he adores is the one who is uniformly and universally present everywhere; he is non-dual. That Brahm has no particular name that limits him to a specific direction, e.g. the Lord of the east or west directions, for Brahm residing 'here' and the one residing 'there' is the same transcendental supreme authority that rules all the directions with the same authority and powers. The Purush residing in any of the directions 'there' does not have an independent identity of its own that is more worthy of worship than that of the Purush residing 'here'. That is, the same Brahm lives 'there' as much as he lives 'here'. This is because Brahm is 'non-dual'.

Besides this, according to the Purans, the patron God of the directions is Aswinikumars. They are twins and cannot be separated from one another. They symbolise the inseparability of the Atma and Brahm. Instead of this holistic form of worship, Balaki had been worshipping numerous Gods in various directions. For instance, he worshipped Indra in the east, Fire God in the south-east, Yama God in the south, Nairiti in the south-west, Water God (Varun) in the west, Kuber (the treasurer of Gods) in the north, Wind God (Vayu) in the north-west, Ishan (Shiva) in the north-east, Brahma in the zenith, Prithivi (earth) in the nadir, as also the Sun God and the Moon God. This is the version according to the Purans. According to this Upanishad, these Gods are different. See Canto 3, Brahmin 9.

³A person who treats everyone alike and shares with them whatever he has, is naturally loved by these people compared to a man who treats himself on a separate footing and treats others as being inferior to himself with a selfish view. Naturally then the companions of the former would never abandon him, and they would stand him in good stead.]

12. Sage Gargya (Balaki) said once again, 'I worship, adore and honour Brahm in the Purush present in the shadow¹'.

Ajatshatru strongly rebuked him, saying, 'No, no; it's not that. I regard the shadow as 'death personified', and I worship and honour this shadow as such²'.

A person who realises this fact lives the full length of his life and he does not have to die prematurely³ (12).

[Note--¹A *shadow* is formed of an object that has a physical presence and which is not an abstract conception. The shadow is dark, signifying ignorance and delusions. There is no life in a shadow. What Balaki intends to convey is that if Brahm is everywhere, he must be present in the shadow, but he forgot that the king was much wiser than him. He

would immediately see the flaw in seeing someone or something as lively and splendid as Brahm in a dark shadow.

²Ajatshatru rebuked the sage for his fallacious thinking and the erroneous conception about the reality of Brahm when the sage said that the supreme Brahm represented by the Purush is present in the shadow. The shadow represents something that is gone and past, something that is beyond its prime phase. We usually say that a person who has lost his vigour and strength as being a 'shadow' of his past self. A shadow is dark, and darkness is a metaphor for *death*, and lack of vitality and life. It also signifies ignorance because a wise man, such as Balaki in the present case, should know that the Atma representing Brahm is radiant and glorious, and therefore it cannot be something dark and foreboding like the dark shadow. Hence, what the shadow actually depicts is not Brahm but the opposite factor of it, i.e. it represents 'death'. So it must be respected for this aspect of creation because death is as much a part of creation as is life.

³A wise man who sees death facing in his face and is aware that one day he too would become a 'shadow', or one day he would also be gone from this world and become history, does not get emotionally and sentimentally attached to this mundane world of material pleasures and sensual gratifications. He would not hanker after it and get unduly worked up for his unfilled dreams. His life would thus be peaceful and regulated, thereby reducing stresses and tensions that reduce life span of an ordinary man who is less realised. See also verse no. 10.]

13. Sage Gargya (Balaki) persisted, saying, 'I worship, adore and honour Brahm in his form as the Purush residing in the Atma of the creature¹'.

Ajatshatru corrected him by saying, 'No, I worship it as the one who has the characteristics that the Atma possesses, i.e. as an 'Atmanvi' or one who personifies the Atma or possesses the Atma²'.

A person who worships, adores and honours Brahm with these attributes and qualities is regarded as realised and enlightened about the Brahm and the Atma. He is indeed wise and erudite amongst his peers. He is contemplative and a thinker who has a deep insight into what consists of the essence of Brahm and the Atma. Such people are blessed with equally wise and intelligent offspring and family³'.

After this debate, sage Gargya became silent⁴ (13).

[Note—¹Balaki has learned from the scriptures that Brahm resides in the living creature as its *Atma*. Now, this Atma is not a simple thing to understand that a mere casual mention of it as being the residence of Brahm would suffice. A lot of research and contemplation is needed for it. No one has seen the Atma and so how can Balaki worship an entity about whom he has no first hand knowledge and neither has he witnessed it, because had he witnessed or experienced Brahm, or for that matter had a truthful knowledge of it, he wouldn't have seen and worshipped Brahm in so many different and diverse places as the sun, the moon, the lightening, the sky, the wind, the fire, the water, an image in a mirror, the sound, the directions and the shadow etc. He is not certain of himself where to find and worship Brahm in a precise manner; he is told by scriptures that Brahm resides here and there, and he just goes to pray to him there without understanding the practical implications of what the scriptures imply.

²The king stresses that the Atma is characterised by such virtues as wisdom and erudition. Brahm is the most enlightened and wise entity in

creation, and is a metaphor for such virtues as defined by the terms omniscient, all-knowing, wise and intelligent. The creature's Atma has these virtues as its integral and inherent attribute, and if it does not exhibit them it is because it is veiled by ignorance and deluded by it. So merely worshipping Atma that might be veiled in ignorance is not the honest worshipping of Brahm. Rather, the king would worship and honour that Atma as Brahm which is enlightened and realised. Again, this Atma resides in the body of a living creature that is a microcosmic revelation of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic revelation of Brahm. Therefore, the king prefers to worship an enlightened and self-realised being who is a visible manifestation of Brahm. Such a creature has truly understood what the Atma is, and so he is known as 'Atmanavi'.

In effect, Ajatshatru told the sage that his view of Brahm is incomplete and lop-sided. He is very proud of his knowledge of Brahm, and too certain and over confident about himself and his knowledge. But he has much to learn still.

The Atma refers to the pure conscious soul present in the bosom of all living beings. This Atma is a personification of the primary entity in creation which is the very cause and end of creation. This eclectic, divine, magnificent and enigmatic entity is called the supreme transcendental Brahm, and it had revealed its self as the self-realised creature.

³The followers of a wise man follow in his footsteps. They are taught by him things in which he himself believes. They, therefore, too become seekers of Truth. They are aspirants of self-realization, and they sincerely and diligently aspire to know about Brahm.

⁴It is to the credit of the learned sage that he acceded to the views of the learned king without arguments, and willingly accepted even his own defeat without getting annoyed and cursing the king for humiliating him. This shows the greatness of ancient sages and seers that they had no ego and vanity, and that is why they could unravel great secrets of creation because they would not hesitate to coordinate their knowledge with that of their peers, and not fight with each other over any violation of their so-called superior knowledge, or 'copyright' over knowledge as it were.]

14. [Then Ajatshatru delivered the so-called final punch to Gargya—]

Ajatshatru then asked (sage Gargya Balaki), 'Is this all? [That is, is this all you have to say about Brahm?]

He replied, 'Yes, that is all!'

The king sternly snubbed him, saying, 'It is not possible to know about Brahm with this limited spiritual, metaphysical and theological knowledge'.

Then sage Gargya Balaki proposed to the king— 'Should I get ready to serve you (as a disciple since I have been defeated in this discussion or debate of Brahm).' [That is, sage Gargya asked king Ajatshatru to accept him as his disciple and allow him to serve him. A disciple first serves his teacher, his Guru, and then the teacher blesses him with knowledge which the disciple seeks from him.] (14)

[Note—Gargya was chastised and extremely humbled. It is to the credit of the great sage and his modesty that his haughtiness of being a Brahmin by birth, a sage, a senior person and a learned scholar did not overtake him and eclipse his wisdom and a sense of propriety. He did not either feel shy to accept defeat at the hands of a king of the Kshatriya race and

curse him for humiliating him in the court, or to suggest that he would like to be the king's disciple. His ego and self pride did not come in the way of his asking the king to be his teacher and complete the deficiency of knowledge that he has about Brahm. He did not feel shy to ask the king to help him in his endeavour to become aware of the complete knowledge of Brahm. Great souls aren't ashamed of their limitations; they are more concerned instead about learning and self improvement than feeling insulted or humiliated in public by the exposure of their limitations. Salutation to such great and true seekers of the Truth!]

15. Hearing this request from sage Gargya Balaki, king Ajatshatru said, 'It is unconventional that a Brahmin approaches a Kshatriya to seek knowledge about Brahm. In spite of it, I shall teach you about Brahm (i.e. I accept you as my disciple and shall endeavour to give you an idea of the wider ramifications of the concept of Brahm than what you are aware of at present)'.

The king got up and caught hold of the sage's hands and took him to a sleeping man. The king tried to wake that man up by calling out to him— 'Oh Brahmin (or Brahm, meaning Brahm personified), oh the white-clothed man, oh Som, oh king, etc.', but that sleeping man did not wake up. The king then shook him up with his hands, and the man immediately woke up (15).

16. King Ajatshatru asked sage Gargya Balaki, 'When this man was in the deep sleep state of existence (i.e. when he was sleeping soundly), can you tell me where was his conscious and thinking form (or where was he consciously present because he did not hear me calling out to him), and from where has he come here in the waking state and has woken up to the realities of this world?'

But the sage had no answer for it (16).

[Note—When the man was soundly sleeping, his body was lying there in front. If it is supposed that the body is the true identity of the man and represents his 'conscious self', then why did not he respond to the king's calling him by the name with which he was known in this world, or was recognised by the clothes he was wearing? The king called him using respectful words such as a Brahmin who personifies Brahm, a white-clothed man indicating that he was a Sanyasi (a reclusive monk or a friar), Som indicating one who is gentle and calm, and as a king to indicate that the king had no haughtiness about his own exalted stature and was wise enough to recognise that the man's true self is not the body lying asleep but the Atma inside that body, and this Atma is the sovereign for all the creatures.

The man was very much alive, and all his organs were also very much alive. His ears could hear, but why did he not respond? Where was he that he did not hear someone calling him?]

17. Then Ajatshatru explained to him, 'The wise, all-knowing, omniscient and enlightened pure conscious Atma (representing the supreme Purush or Brahm) is the true self or identity of the man. This pure consciousness (the Atma), which is the true identity of the man, is called the 'Purush' because it lives inside a body.

When this living man was fast asleep, or was in the deep sleep state of consciousness, the latter had withdrawn itself from his organs of perception and action and had taken rest in the subtle space of the heart called the 'Hridyakash' in metaphysics. [This is because the Atma has its residence in the heart.]

During this state of rest, this wise and omniscient Atma or pure consciousness withdraws all its virtues of perception, or all its abilities of knowing the external world (much like the octopus or the amoeba withdrawing its tentacles inside its self while it rests).

Then it is known as 'Swapiti'¹, literally one who has reached his own self. The vital signs of life inside the gross body, called the Pran (the various vital winds which are synonymous with life in a creature's body; see note to verse no. 6) which drive the various sense organs of the creature's body, come to a withdrawal mode. This affects all the sense organs such as the eyes (the faculty of sight), the ears (the faculty of hearing), and the Mana (mind; the faculty of thought and intelligence)—all of them are in a withdrawal mode² (17).

[Note—¹The pure conscious Atma or the omniscient Purush is called *Swapiti* because during the sleeping state of existence, the Atma reaches its primary form of not being attracted and concerned about the external world, and instead remaining in a state of perpetual bliss. This is proved by the fact that a sleeping man remains calm and unruffled inspite of the turmoil that might be going on in the outside world while he sleeps. He forgets about all his worldly worries. He would remain blissful even if his entire household is burned down as long as he is asleep because his Atma has withdrawn itself into its primary form or self and therefore remains in its principal nature of being calm and unruffled inspite of the upheavals created in this world of sense organs. This external world exists only as long as the Atma allows the various sense organs to interact with it, to become aware of it, and that is why the world is called the 'world of sense organs'. It is not called the world of the Atma!

²When the man (or his true identity the Atma) sleeps, all the sense organs are withdrawn by him. In this state, all the organs of the gross body and the subtle body, such as the eyes, ears and the mind are put on hold, or they lose their independence. They are kept in a state of 'suspended animation', as it were, by the Pran (the vital wind forces of the body that keeps these organs alive while the man sleeps). The only apparent sign that the sleeping man is alive is his breath—which is the chief vital wind present inside the body and is known as 'Pran' simply because it denotes life in its evident form as 'breath'. From a distance, there appears to be no difference between a sleeping man and a dead person. It is only upon close examination that one reaches the conclusion that the sleeping man is not dead, because he is breathing and his heart is beating signifying the presence of the vital wind known as the Pran and the electrifying vitality provided by the Atma that keeps his heart beating. The rest of the vital winds appear withdrawn because of the fact that the sense organs have ceased to function. As a consequence, the world is not perceived by the Atma.

Meanwhile, the Atma is resting peacefully in the causal body.]

18. When a man is in the state of the dreaming state of consciousness, the sub-consciousness mind comes into play and the man lives in the world of his dreams, a world created by his sub-conscious mind's memory as a

result of his interaction with and experience of the external world while he was awake¹.

In that world of dreams, the person attains different states of existence, acquires various bodies and experiences various circumstances just like a person living in this world during his waking state².

In other words, a man who is awake and the man who is dreaming appear to be the same because both of them have the four different stages of consciousness, both of them have and are affected by different emotions and sentiments, both of them show intelligence and other functions of the mind, both of them use their sense organs to act and do various deeds and thereby either suffer from them or enjoy them. Therefore, during the dreaming state of consciousness, a person might become a great King or a great Brahmin; he might in one moment reach an exalted state and pinnacle of success and exult in it, and in another moment fall into a pit of misery and lowliness, feeling wretched, distressed and fallen.

Like a king roaming around in the company of his subjects and ministers, a dreaming man's consciousness also roams around internally in his own body in the company of the various vital winds called Pran³ (18).

[Note—¹The consciousness has basically two stages of existence—(1) the *waking* and (2) the *sleeping* states. For the purposes of analyzing its behaviour and existential states during these two fundamental stages, they have been classified into four distinct states as follows—

(a) The first stage is called waking or *Jagrat*. During this state, a creature's sense organs consisting of its gross body are active and they receive inputs from the physical material world outside which they transfer to the mind which forms its subtle body. This mind then filters through the clutter of information and either orders the organs of action to respond accordingly, or it consults its supervisor, the intellect for advice. Meanwhile, the mind stores all the information in its data bank for future reference much like the record room of an office. The true self of the creature, the pure conscious Atma, is like the king in whose secretariat the mind and intellect work, and therefore the Atma is the final authority which decides and is responsible for all the things done by each of these individual entities. Even as the king cannot absolve himself for what his subjects do or what is happening in his kingdom though he is not directly involved in the day to day routine work but remains blissfully ensconced in his palace which is the heart in the case of the Atma, this otherwise immaculate Atma is often accused of things that the body or the mind does. During this *Jagrat* state, the Atma interacts with the outside world through the medium of the sense organs and the mind. The sense organs simply collect information and pass them over to the mind, and the rest of the back office work is done by the latter.

The second stage is called *Supta*. This is the sleeping state of consciousness. Here, the creature lives because it's Pran or the vital winds move around and remain active in its different Naadis (tubular ducts in the body such as the nerves and veins etc. which number seventy-two thousand), though his body is inactive. Meanwhile, the consciousness exists in two forms during sleep—viz. as *Swapna* and as *Sushupta*.

(b) *Swapna* or dreaming state is that state of consciousness when the latter has withdrawn its self from being actively involved in the activities of the sense organs of the gross body which relate to the outside world,

but the mind is still active. Here, this consciousness remains active internally through the medium of the vital winds, called the various Prans present inside the body, and moves in the different Naadis (tubular ducts in the body such as the nerves and veins etc.) which keep the mind working. Since no external stimuli is being received from the outside world, the mind begins to replay what is stored in its memory bank and uses its stupendous abilities to imagine and recreate situations and circumstances in an imaginary world of dreams. Since the Atma living in the causal body depends upon the mind living in the subtle body to feel or sense anything, for all practical purposes the Atma begins to live in this new world of dreams and is as involved in it as it was during its waking state. Since the mind is active here, the man remembers some of his dreams even when he wakes up.

(c) The *Sushupta* or the deep sleep state of consciousness is that when the mind has also become defunct, and the Atma lives in seclusion of its causal body and is surrounded by the space of the subtle sky around the heart called the Hridya Akash. Here, the vital winds keep on moving in the different Naadis as during the sleeping state, because all the subtle and imperceptible functions of the inner organs of the body such as the liver, kidneys, heart, pancreas, digestive organs, lungs etc. continue as before, because if they cease to function the body would die. It is the mind now that has gone in a defunct state. But this phase is temporary and shows the true nature and fundamental characteristic of the Atma, which is blissful and peaceful, contented and fulfilled, when it is not disturbed by the mind's constant nagging. That is why a sound asleep man does not want anything, he is not worried about anything, he does not feel anything, he is not concerned about anything, and he does not remember anything. When he wakes up, he feels fresh.

(d) Finally comes the *Turiya* state. This is when the third state becomes a perpetual phenomenon instead of being only a temporary phase. Once this state is reached, then even though the man might wake up in this world and appears to be going about his normal duties, his pure consciousness remains aloof and distanced from the sense organs of perception and the organs of action as well as from the mind.

²As has been explained above, *dreams* recapitulate the world of the waking state. Since there is no physical limitation of the gross body here, the mind can use its potentials to fly swiftly to unknown frontiers. It can even create worlds which are substantially different from the physical world in which the man lives, but the fundamental parameters remain the same. It is like the case of animation done by computers today when the animator can create unimaginable varieties of worlds, but these fakes are based on the physical software installed in the machine. No animation can be done for which the software is not there.

The *mind* has two parts—viz. the conscious and the sub-conscious. The conscious part of the mind consists of only five percent of the total mental life of a man, while the rest, i.e. ninety five percent, consists of the sub-conscious. During the waking state of conscious, the rational mind or the conscious mind works, while the inputs that are gathered during the waking state are stored in the memory bank of the sub-conscious and they come into play when the man is sleeping. The dream is actually the sub-conscious mind playing out what it has learnt during waking state of the mind. The dream more often than not tells the man what he does not realise or does not pay attention to during his waking state; they are in fact the attempt of the mind to bring to our attention what we have been neglecting during the waking state of the mind.

The concept of dream has been elaborately explained in this Upanishad in Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 9—13 and 16.

Sigmund Freud believed that every action is motivated by our ‘unconscious’, and that dreams are a way of wish fulfillment in civilised society where people have to repress their urges. According to him, some of these urges and fantasies could be quite ridiculous and shocking, and hence the mind releases these pent up feelings in the symbolic language of the dream. Freud divided the mind into three parts or sections—viz. the ID (the unconscious centered on primal urges and desires), the Ego (concerned with the conscious and rational aspect of the self; it negotiates with the ID while keeping a reality check on urges and desires), and the Super-ego (which includes our conscious and the moral aspects of the self that we pick up from around us). Thus he said that dreams are a way in which the ID speaks out when our conscious mind is asleep.

³There are five vital winds— (a) ‘Pran’ which is the breath moving in and out of the nose; (b) ‘Apan’ which is the wind passing down the intestine, helping in digestion and excretion; (c) ‘Samaan’ which helps circulation and equal distribution of nourishment in the body; ‘Udan’ which keeps the body upright and helps in moving toxic gases up the body to be expelled by the lungs when breath is exhaled, as well as through cough; and (e) ‘Vyan’ which maintains equilibrium throughout the body. These winds, according to their functions, pervade throughout the body when the man is sleeping. Though his organs of perception (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), and action (hands, legs, mouth, anus and urinary) are not apparently active, but the subtle force that keeps them alive is inherently present in a living man. This force reveals itself in his vital winds which live and move inside the body of a sleeping man though his organs are inactive. Wind is never static, and like the various organs continuously doing one thing or the other during the man’s waking state in this world, these winds continue to roam about through the length and breadth of the body when he is asleep and dreaming. For a waking man, the external world is his playing field, but for a sleeping and dreaming man, the body itself becomes the playing field, and the actions of the external organs of the body are replaced by the movement and activities of these five vital winds.

With this body as the ‘realm’ in which the king-like Atma of the creature moves around with his ‘subjects and ministers’ in the form of the various Pran, let us see now where these winds reside. (i) Pran lives in the mouth, nose, heart, navel and toes; (ii) Apan moves around in the intestine, anus, abdomen, thighs and knees; (iii) Samaan wanders throughout the body uniformly; (iv) Udan finds its place in the hands, legs and joints of the body; and (v) Vyan resides in the ears, thighs, waist, heels, shoulders and throat.]

19. When the creature lives in the state of existence known as ‘deep sleep state of consciousness’ or Sushupta, it has no awareness of anything of the external world. The pure consciousness (i.e. the living conscious factor present in the sleeping creature) along with the intelligent mind retires into the seventy two thousand Naadis (which are tubular ducts or channels present in the body, such as the different nerves and veins) called ‘Hita’ (or one who does favour), and rests there¹. These Naadis radiate out from the central point of the heart to all the parts of the body (much like the veins of a leaf that radiate from the stem and spread out throughout the surface of the leaf). The creature sleeps or rests in this state (when he

crosses the dreaming state and enters the deep sleep state of consciousness).

Just like a child, a great king or a senior Brahmin goes to sleep blissfully after he has enjoyed himself a lot while awake, the creature who is wise also sleeps peacefully and blissfully during the deep sleep state of consciousness² (19).

[Note—¹When the man *sleeps*, his consciousness spreads through its body in the veins and nerves. The mind has gone to sleep in the sense that it no longer remains connected to the sense organs of the gross body which are its normal habitat. It is through these sense organs of perception that the mind had been receiving the inputs about the external world and then making the sovereign, the Atma, aware of the world. The fact that a soundly sleeping man does not respond to calls as shown in verse no. 15 above proves that his ears are not functioning because the mind is asleep. But when the same man is shaken by the hand, he immediately responds because the consciousness was present in the nerves of the body. The body is kept alive because of the flow of blood and other vital elements of life in its veins and nerves. As soon as these Naadis are touched, they are aroused and respond to the stimuli. This is the difference between a sleeping man and a dead body—in the latter case, the consciousness has left the Naadis along with the vital winds called Pran which are moving in these Naadis in a living body but make their exit from the body at the time of death.

²A *child* sleeps soundly because it has no worry in this world and is oblivious of any sufferings that the adult is aware of. Similarly, the *king* who is righteous and caring does not have any fear from his subjects or enemies; he does not worry that someone would kill him during his sleep or is worried of any rebellion or betrayal in the event of an unexpected attack by an enemy. The *Brahmin* who is learned and wise sleeps peacefully and soundly because he remains aloof from worldly attachments, and instead remains ever engrossed in contemplation and thinking about the supreme Brahm as expounded in the scriptures that he has been studying; besides this, he is certain that he has not to worry about his daily needs because the people would take care of his worldly requirements.

This state of deep sleep, called the *Sushupta*, is when the creature experiences the bliss of Brahm, but the irony is that it does not remember it when he wakes up into the external world. This is propounded by Patanjali in his Yogsutra. This state of consciousness is similar to meditative state attained by Yogis (ascetics) when a man is totally oblivious of the external world though he is alive and living in it. A step further ahead in this direction leads one to achieve the state of ‘Samadhi’ wherein the person remains perpetually in a blissful state inspite of his apparent wakefulness in this world. The concept of Sushupta is also explained in Canto 2, Brahmin 3, verse no. 15.]

20. Even as a spider climbs up the wall by walking on the thread of its own web created by its own self, and big and small sparks fly off from a burning fire, all the Prans (signs of life), all the Lokas (worlds), all the Gods (personifications of the numerous virtues and attributes of creation), and all the Bhuts (the mortal creatures representing the elements of creation such as sky, air, fire, water and earth) in this creation are

produced from the same Atma or soul which is pure consciousness, and then they spread out into the world.

The name of this central figure in this entire setup, i.e. the Atma, as envisioned in the Upanishads is ‘the core of the Truth’, the ‘nucleus of the essential, irrefutable and immutable Truth’.

Verily, it is the Pran that is the Truth, and it is the Atma that is at the ‘core’ of that Truth (20).

[Note—The *Pran* is the vital life in the body of a creature, while the *Atma* is its consciousness, its soul. This ‘consciousness’ representing the true identity of the creature as its Atma, which is its enlightened and wise omniscient soul, is different from the consciousness present as signs of life or Pran in the various organs of the body.

The Atma is a microcosmic representation of the cosmic almighty and majestic Soul in the individual body of the creature; the awareness and realisation of its presence in the body makes the wise creature aware of and realise its true divine nature vis-à-vis the falsehood of what is non-Atma represented by the façade of this artificial and deluding material world which appears to be real but which actually lacks pith. This Atma or pure consciousness resides in the causal body of the creature, the body so named because it is the very ‘cause’ of all that exists. If there was no Atma, there would have been no ‘body’ known as the living creature. The Atma is at the root cause of the body, for the body is created to house the Atma. That is why the habitat of the Atma in the physical gross body, i.e. the heart of the creature, is also called the core of that body; it is the central dynamo of the body in the sense that if the heart ceases to function, the body is immediately declared dead.

On the contrary, the consciousness present as the sense of perceptions in the organs of the gross body that make the body alive and receive the different stimuli from the external world, i.e. the consciousness that is part of the physical organs of the body and which keep the body alive and functioning, is equivalent to the life of the body, or its Pran. This Pran is also synonymous with the vital winds because the body is kept alive by breath and other airs present in it which regulate its various functions. See note of verse no. 18 above.

It is to be noted here that if this Pran leaves, say, anyone particular organ, i.e. suppose the hands become paralysed, the body as a whole does not die as long as the Atma resides in its heart. But if the heart ceases to function, i.e. when the Atma leaves the body, the body as a whole is declared dead.]

Canto 2 Brahmin 2

[The following four verses of Brahmin 2 elaborates upon what has been said in the previous Brahmin about Pran as being the Truth and the Atma as being the ‘quintessential truth at the core of this Truth’. The Atma residing in the bosom of the creature is like an innocent child who is pure by nature but depends upon its organs to learn and interact with this world and becomes soon influenced by what it is taught by them. It learns about the world as it is taught by the teachers symbolised by the various sense organs. Metaphors are used here to explain this point.

Since these organs are the points from where the mind receives its information inputs from the external world, they are like guards who regulate the so-called doors through which the Atma receives the world. Or in other words, they are like the entry points through which the mind receives all sorts of information from the world, filters them and then educates the child-like innocent Atma about its surrounding. Therefore, the mind and the intellect act as the nurse and the guide of the Pran which is the basic life or consciousness of the creature in the form of its Atma. Naturally, when a child studies in a good school and lives in a good environment both in the world in which it plays (i.e. the external world perceived by the sense organs) as well as in the family in which it lives (i.e. the heart advised by the mind and the intellect), the child would develop good values and noble qualities. Likewise the creature too develops good virtues and cultivates good values if it is aided by an erudite mind and aided by restrained organs.

A wise person who has realised the important role of the sense organs vis-à-vis the Atma is regarded as a wise sage who has realised his true self.]

1. A person who is wise and erudite enough to recognise who this child-like¹ essential life-giving Pran (the subtle and vital spark of divine life or sublime pure consciousness present in a creature's bosom that infuses life and consciousness in it) is along with its 'Adhan'² (meaning a habitat, a resting place, a dwelling, a place where something is kept—here referring to the body), 'Pratyadhan'³ (literally meaning counter blow or counter impact; that which is the opposite of Adhan; that which helps to educate and make one aware of the realities; that which acts as a guide and advisor to aid truthful knowledge), 'Sthuna'⁴ (a post, a pillar, a foundation, a peg or an anchor that provides the necessary strength and support to survive), and 'Daam'⁵ (a rope to tie a young calf), is able to control the seven 'Bhratrivyā'⁶ (literally the seven compatriots or peers or brothers) who cause hindrance for him, who trouble him and are inimically inclined towards him.

Who is this infant child? Which pure and consciousness entity is known as the truthful identity of the creature? It is the subtle and sublime form of life called the 'Pran' in the form of the innocent Atma (pure consciousness) residing inside the bosom of the creature.

Its residence or dwelling place or habitat is this gross body; therefore the body is its Adhan.

[This is because the Atma, symbolised by a child here, needs a dwelling place to live.]

Its nurse and guide is the head (or the mind-intellect complex); hence it is its Pratyadhan.

[This is because the 'head', by its location as well as its function, symbolises one who is exalted and wise enough to be a moral guide and advisor to someone.]

It is tied to the body by the various vital winds/airs called Prans present in it and which are metaphors for life and vitality of the body. The Atma draws its strength, power, stamina, vitality, and the ability to perform and do anything from the vital winds present in the body, known

collectively as the vital Prans of the creature; so they are called its Sthuna.

[That is, it is the presence of the various vital airs in the body that keeps the body alive, enabling the Atma to live in it and become enlightened about the world and its own self besides performin so many tasks. Obviously, no soul can live in a dead body from which the Pran has left. These Prans are metaphors for life in the body of a creature, and therefore they act like a peg or anchor or pillar that tie a creature's Atma or his true 'self' to this body; they are the foundations upon which the whole edifice of life is based. This is evident when a creature dies, for as soon as the vital Prans leave the body and it dies, the Atma is liberated from its bondage and gets freedom to either re-enter another body depending upon its inclinations and desires, or find ultimate salvation and emancipation by preferring to merge with its primary source, the cosmic Atma known as Brahm, and never to re-enter another body at all.]

Finally, the food that the creature eats is like the rope that ties it down and gives its strength to live in the body and perform its various functions; thus it is its Daam.

[That is, the food eaten by the creature is used to support life in the body and help the Atma to live happily within it. This food is digested and nourishes the body which is called the 'Anna Maye Kosh', or the cell constructe out of food that harbours the Atma. Food is compared to a rope because it serves as an anchor to hold the body together, it sustains the gross body by providing nourishment to its gross organs of action and perception, and it nourishes the subtle organs such as the mind and intellect as well as the heart where the Atma lives. It kind of establishes a link between the life of the gross body and the subtle body. Therefore the food is regarded as a rope or anchor serving two purposes—one as the nourisher of the gross body and its various organs, and the other that moves as the vital life giving strength and energy in the Naadis or veins and nerves to support life in them. The Atma lives between the sense organs and the Naadis as has been clearly said in previous Brahmin 1, verse no. 16-20. Therefore it is virtually tied as by a rope to the body by the food eaten by it. When food does not support the body, these organs and the Naadis would wither away and die, and the Atma would not have anything that can help it to remain attached or pegged or anchored to the body.

In short, food is like a rope that binds the body and the life in it to the Atma. As long as the body continues to eat and get nourishment from it, it would not die, and consequentially the Atma would not be released from its bondage. The food 'anchors' the Atma to the body.] (1).

[Note--¹The Atma or the soul of the creature is compared to an infant *child* because it is innocent, uncorrupt, pure in heart and mind, and susceptible to external influences. It is blissful and oblivious of the pains, agonies, miseries and other troubles and tribulation that an adult creature faces in this world. Like a child, the Pran can be moulded in any mould by its teacher, guide, nurse or parent, which in this case is the intellect and mind of the creature. This Atma is conscious and sensitive like a child, but it can not do anything on its own even as a child is unable to do anything on its own and depends upon its parents or nurse or guide or teacher to help it out.

²The Atma lives in the gross body of a creature; hence the body is its *Adhan* or residence.

³It depends upon the intellect and mind, which is the subtle body of the creature, even as an infant child depends upon the mother, or the Nanny, for its interaction with the outside world. Have we ever observed a one month old child—it gazes intently and blankly at every new thing, at every new face that it sees; it cannot speak, it cannot walk, it cannot eat or taste or smell or touch on its own and depends upon the mother to teach it about all these things. It does not know how to distinguish between what is good for it and what is not. A child would gleefully catch hold of a rope as easily as it would a snake, not knowing that the latter would kill him. It is the nurse who tells and teaches the child what is good or bad for him, even as a wise intellect can put a shine to the Atma and a corrupt intellect can make it into a demon. In this example, the intellect is like the teacher, while the mind acts as the nurse, because the child's day-to-day functions are taken care of by the nurse even as the creature's day-to-day routine activities or taken care of the mind, whilst the intellect acts as its moral preceptor and guide. Therefore, the mind and intellect act as the *Pratyadhan*.

⁴⁻⁵A child derives its strength from the food eaten by it; it virtually depends upon the food that it eats, or the drink that it drinks. Thus, the food and drink act as the anchor for its life; the food and drink is the child's strength and power; it is tied or anchored to the food and drink, for without them it cannot survive. Therefore, Anna (food and drink and their nutritional elements) is its ⁴*Sthun* (anchor) and ⁵*Daam* (rope).

The food eaten by the child is broken into three parts—the first is the gross part (such as fiber and water) that forms stool and urine, the second part consists of carbohydrates, proteins, fats etc. which give energy, strength, muscle building ingredients, fat etc. to provide the child with the necessary energy, strength and body building materials, and the third part is the basic trace elements such as the vitamins, the minerals and other essential elements which help to supplement the nutritional value of the food so that it is of any benefit for the body.

⁶The so-called *seven Bhratrivya* or literally brothers or compatriots or peers who need to be tamed are the five organs of perception—ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin, and the mind and the intellect = seven. They are called 'brothers/compatriots/peers' because they live along with the Atma in the body. If they are favourable to the Atma, they can be of great help to it, but if they are uncontrolled, evil-minded and pervert, they cause innumerable hardships for it even as brothers and other near relatives of a child can give it a lot of problem if they are not kind hearted and favourably disposed towards it. So a wise man should endeavour to control these brothers from tormenting the child-like Atma.

The two vital entities that define life in the creature—the Pran and the Atma—are like twins; both of them look alike and depend upon each other, and neither of them can live independently in the body of a creature without the help of the other.]

2. The Atma living in the bosom of the creature is assisted by seven assistants present in the eye. These are called 'Akshit' because they represent those factors of creation that sustain life and give it an element of imperishability. These are the following—(i) the red strands (veins, capillaries) seen in the eye stand for the 'Rudra Shakti' or the energy which is violent and vigorous, uncompromising and unrelenting, and as

potent and powerful as the electric; (ii) the tears and wetness of the eye stand for the rain-bearing clouds that represent the stupendous life sustaining qualities of the water element in Nature; (iii) the pupil represents the splendorous and supreme power of Aditya (the Sun) which gives light, heat and energy to the world; (iv) the black area around the pupil, i.e. the iris, of the eye represents the fire element and its strength to reduce everything to ashes (because fire turns everything into black soot); (v) the white part of the eye, i.e. the conjunctiva, represents the strength and the powers of Indra (as the king of Gods as well as the Lord of the clouds and controller of the rains); (vi) the lower lids of the eye represent the earth because the earth forms the base on which everything is located, and which supports and harbours life in its bowls; and (vii) the upper lids stand for the heavens or the sky above.

A wise person who can 'see' (understand and realise the importance of) the subtle meaning or import of these elements of creation (as the benevolence of the supreme creator or Father who has well provided for the child (Atma) in order to help it survive in this world) never faces dearth of food. [That is, he is respected and served by all people who take care of his dietary needs. He uses his eyes of wisdom to look deep into the hidden meaning of what is said in the scriptures when he reads them. When he observes the world, he tries to see the underlying concealed truth behind the external façade that might be very misleading. Such a man would naturally be well looked after by others.] (2).

[Note—Only a wise person can visualise the *eye* with this eclectic and holistic metaphysical perspective. The eyes are also like an oyster shell, the two lids as the oyster's upper and lower flaps, while the pearl inside is akin to the eye ball itself. This pearl is a beautiful creation of Nature just like the eye of the body. Out of the five organs of perception, the 'eye' is selected because it is the most important instrument in the body through which the creature sees the external world and becomes enlightened about it. It is the light present in the eye that lights the entire creation for it; without the eye the world would be a dark place signifying ignorance and blankness of wisdom. All the information about the existence of the visible world outside reaches the dark recesses of the mind through the medium of the eye. The eye is a metaphor for wisdom and enlightenment because it helps a creature to 'see for itself' and get enlightened. Since the creature's true identity is the Atma, this eye is the instrument which the Atma uses to get enlightened and become wise so that its darkness of ignorance and delusions are dispelled.

All the important factors of Nature which directly concern the creature in this world—such as the earth, the sky, the water, the fire, the sun, the clouds and the rain, as well as the good virtues and qualities represented by their king Indra—are envisioned to be symbolically present in the eye, because a person becomes aware of all these fundamental elements of creation through the medium of his eyes and not through other organs of perception such as the ears, the nose, the tongue or the skin.]

3. [After describing the importance of the eye, this verse describes the significance of creature's head which is likened to a Chamas which is a large ladle-like pot with a lid used to offer liquid as oblation to the

sacrificial fire, or to drink Som, which is sanctified liquid, during fire sacrificial rituals**.]

In this regard, there is this Shloka (a sacred hymn of the scripture)—The ‘Chamas’ has a hole (representing mouth) at the lower end, and a rounded dry upper part (representing the skull)¹. This Chamas contains all the glories, fame and majesties that are present in the world (known as Vishwa)².

There are seven wise sages who symbolically reside on its sides besides the eighth sage who is called ‘Vak’ and who speaks in the language of the Vedas³.

This so-called Chamas is verily the ‘head’ of the creature because the head has the mouth representing the hole at the lower end of the Chamas, and the skull as the upper lid with an outer convex surface.

The great glory and majesty of this creation is represented by or personified as the Pran of the creature (symbolising the divine life present in the creature). Therefore, this Pran also resides in this Chamas (just like the Som)⁴.

Similarly, the seven sages referred here are also the various manifestations of this Pran⁵. The eighth Brahmin (sage) is the faculty of speech because it is the medium by which learned Brahmins express what the Vedas say (i.e. they speak, chant, recite or preach the words of the great Vedas)⁶ (3).

[Note--¹This shape of the *Chamas* represents the upper part of the body above the neck, the head and its other parts such as the mouth etc. of a creature—the mouth is the hole or the spout at the lower end of the Chamas through which the sanctified liquid is poured into the sacrificial fire; the cavity of the Chamas that holds the liquid to be offered as oblation is like the cavity of the head, and the wide rounded lid at the top of the Chamas is like the skull of the head.

²The head is the place where the mind and intellect, i.e. the brain of the man is located. It is the brain which gives erudition, sagacity, scholarship, skills, wisdom and knowledge to him, and it is obvious that these virtues are directly proportionate to the fame and glory that a man acquires in this world because these virtues are given a premium in society.

³The *seven wise sages* are the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and one tongue. The *eighth sage* is the faculty of speech present in the mouth through which the man pronounces the Vedas. These organs are called ‘wise’ sages because they guide and advice the man and his Atma on all matters pertaining to his existence. A wise advisor can lead one to the vertex of success, whether it is related to worldly success or to spiritual achievements. The phrase ‘who speaks the Vedas’ is simply a figure of speech to highlight that a man should use his faculty of speech for good purposes and not for what is evil and unrighteous.

⁴The *Pran* referred to here is the *breath* that sustains life in the body. The breath resides in the nose as well as in the mouth because we can breathe both by the nostrils as well as by the mouth. This Pran is an elementary requirement for a person to speak, one, because only a living person can speak, and second, the air passing through the vocal cords produce sound in the throat thereby enabling one to speak.

⁵The *Pran* referred here is the various *faculties* that are present in the seven sense organs of perceptions located in the head as mentioned

above. Even as the body is useless without the spark of life in it, these seven organs of the head would also be useless if they lacked their respective faculties and powers to carry on with their designated functions. The word 'Pran' implies that these organs do have a 'life' in them; they are very much diligent, proactive and agile in carrying out their functions; they are not dead entities.

⁶The faculty of *speech* is marked out especially because a man's level of wisdom and erudition is displayed through what he speaks, through his words. None of the other seven organs can display his wisdom and erudition as much as his spoken words. The spoken word shows how wise, learned, erudite and sagacious a person is—it helps to establish his fame and glory in this world. So, this head contains that divine liquid of wisdom and erudition in a personified form as the faculty of speech. Besides this, the fact that a creature is alive is most evident when he speaks, as illustrated by the fact that doctors ask a person to say something after some serious operation to judge his level of recuperation and alertness after the surgery.

****After showing the importance of the eye in the previous verse, the present verse describes the importance of the mouth and the head. It is compared to a pot, called a Chamas, used to pour sanctified liquid into a sacrificial fire. Let us consider why a Chamas was chosen as an illustration for the head. A Chamas, as noted above, is a large ladle-like pot with a lid used to offer liquid as oblation to the sacrificial fire, or to drink Som, which is sanctified liquid, during fire sacrificial rituals. It resembles a kettle with just a hole at the lower end to replace the elongated spout. This hole is the mouth of the body. It is through the mouth that the hymns of the Vedas, symbolising a repository of knowledge and wisdom, are spoken aloud or incanted, especially during the fire sacrificial ritual; hence the reference to a *Chamas* because it is a holy pot used in those rituals where learned Brahmins chant the hymns of the Vedas. The head is where the mind and intellect are located; these organs are the receptacle of all sorts of knowledge and wisdom that any creature possesses. That is why also the Chamas is used as a metaphor for something that holds and accepts knowledge and wisdom. No other part of the body that is like a receptacle, such as the abdomen, displays these especial characteristics of the head.]**

4. [In this verse, the various perceptions of the sense organs located in the head have been personified as ancient sages of the Vedic period.]

These two ears are the sages named Gautam and Bharadwaj; the two eyes are the sages Vishwamitra and Jamdagni; the two nostrils are the sages Vashistha and Kashyap; and the faculty of speech is sage Atri because it is through the mouth that food is eaten. It is defined by the word 'Ati'¹. A person who becomes wisened to these facts become eligible to partake of the desired food and drink, derive their benefit, and become their Lord (i.e. he is able to enjoy food by sharing it amongst all, and therefore is respected by all as a selfless provider of nourishment for all) (4).

[Note—¹The adjective *Ati* means excessive, extra, more than normal, something that is superlative, and that which is superior to others. That is, the mouth is the most important entity amongst the group of eight organs located in the head in as much as it helps the man to eat and drink

without which he cannot survive. The 'Pran' or the vital signs of life located in the mouth is superior to others because whatever the mouth eats is passed on to the body and its nourishment is utilised by the whole body instead of only by the mouth; the benefits of the food are shared by all. This selfless virtue of the mouth makes the Pran representing sage Atri as the most senior amongst others. This fact of the superiority of the Pran residing in the mouth has been elaborately explained in Canto 1, Brahmin 3 of this Upanishad.

Further, the Atma is considered the chief patron on whose behalf these sages are supposed to perform a religious sacrifice in which the Chamas is used. In this sacrifice dedicated to 'life', Pran plays the role of the chief priest represented by sage Atri, and it is accompanied by seven other priests represented by other sages as mentioned in this verse. Since the chief priest presides over the chanting of Vedic Mantras, the mouth is chosen as the seat for the chief priest Atri symbolised as the Pran. The chief priest heads the chanting; he says one hymn and it is repeated by others. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the Pran in the mouth is followed by other Prans of the other sense organs of perception located in the head.]

Canto 2 Brahmin 3

[In this Brahmin, the two forms of the enigmatic supreme and transcendental Brahm are described.]

1. Brahm¹ has two forms (i.e. interpretations, connotations, manifestations or revelations)—visible with attributes, and invisible without attributes; mortal and immortal; unmoving and moving; and truthful, verifiable, logical and rational as well as the opposite of it² (1).

[Note—¹*Brahm* is an enigmatic supreme and transcendental entity in this creation that defies all definitions and adjectives, and it is beyond all comprehension and all-interpretations. As is evident in this verse, it has paradoxical qualities; it is qualified by one set of attributes and then these attributes are denied in it. That is why Brahm has been defined by the words 'Neti-neti'—neither this nor that—by the Vedas. See verse no. 6 of this Brahmin. The Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition especially uses this method of 'Neti Neti', or the 'elimination process' to describe the fundamental form and nature of Brahm. The Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition especially uses this method of 'Neti-Neti', or 'the elimination process' to describe the fundamental form and nature of Brahm.

Briefly, Brahm is the name given to that entity in creation which is the supreme transcendental eternal Soul of the entire setup of creation. It is characterised by such qualities as being self-existent, self-evident, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, infinite and imperishable, one single entity that is all-pervading and all-encompassing, immanent and indivisible, wise and enlightened, the subject of all knowledge and research as well as knowledge personified. It is gross as well as subtle, with attributes as well as without any. These apparently opposite qualities make Brahm so special and unique that it defies all conceivable definitions, because on the face it appears to have a dual form, but it is essentially non-dual and indivisible one single whole.

Brahm is a term that applies to the entire gamut of creation, such as its growth, expansion, evolution, development, and the swelling of the ethereal spirit or soul to completely fill it from within like the air in an inflated balloon, and cover it from the outside like an envelop. Brahm is one divine essence and source from which everything that has an existence emanated, or with which they are identified and to which they would ultimately return. It is the common denominator present in each and every single entity that has an existence, but at the same time remaining aloof from them. It is the real Absolute and the unequivocal Truth in creation.

In fact, Brahm is the subject of all Upanishadic discussions, all metaphysical and theological debates and ponderings. It is the object of all meditation and worship and knowledge. It is the final frontier of spiritual knowledge that is achievable with honest endeavour, and it is called the ultimate Truth and the absolute Reality in all that exists. Without Brahm, nothing is true and real.

²The visible aspect of Brahm as is revealed in the form of this world is characterised by the fact that it would come to an end, because everything that is born must have an end. That aspect of Brahm which is invisible and without any attributes, such as the sky, is characterised by immortality. That which is static is subject to decay and death as is evident from the water of a pool which gets polluted and contaminated and is unfit for drinking, causing diseases and death. On the other hand, that which is always on the move, such as the water of the river, is considered life giving and a harbinger of vitality and growth.]

2. That which is not space/sky or wind/air element (i.e. that which is fire, water and earth element) have a form, are visible, are grosser, are perishable, are immobile (in the sense that they cannot move on their own). And it is the truth (i.e. this statement is truthful because these three entities are also representatives of Brahm which is truthful as all that exist in this creation, whether visible or not, are manifestations of one Brahm)¹.

The essential, vital and subtle essence called the soul of these latter three elements (i.e. the fire, the water and the earth element) is the same quintessential factor that gives the sun its heat, light and splendour. In other words, the invisible life-giving soul of the fire, the water and the earth has revealed itself as the dazzling splendour and light of the sun; it makes the sun so scorching hot that it resembles a ball of fire² (2).

[Note--¹There are five basic elements in creation—sky, wind/air, fire/energy, water and earth. Out of these, the first two, the *sky* and the *wind/air*, are infinite and all pervading as well as invisible; they are the subtlest of the five. The wind/air fills the entire space of the sky so much so that it is impossible to segregate them, and therefore they are often synonymously addressed. They do not have any particular shape and dimension and extend as far as the creation extends. Hence they represent Brahm's invisible and infinite form.

On the other hand, the *fire*, the *water* and the *earth* are all visible by the naked eye and they represent the visible formed variant of Brahm because they have specific qualities and attributes. All these three have limited dimensions and scope. The fire is limited to the place where it burns, such as the fire pit; the water is limited to the body that carries it, such as the well, a pond or a river; and the earth is obviously rounded and has a fixed dimension.

That which has a form is 'perishable' because sooner or later it will decay and come to an end; it has a gross existence as well because it can be easily felt and held. We can hold the fire in the candle or lamp; we can hold the water as ice; we can hold the earth in an earthen pot.

Anything that has a form is 'stable', because at least as long as it survives in that form, it retains that particular identity and form with specific features that characterize it. For example, an idol is stable as long as its form is not changed. But when the same idol is broken down to its basic ingredients from which it was crafted, it ceases not only to be called an idol but also loses its distinctive identity.

Only a stable entity having a given set of external features that can be verified and physically seen is said to be *true*. The other entity is abstract which cannot be defined and verified, such as the sky and wind/air element.

²The fire is characterised by *heat* and *energy* which are intrinsically present in the bowl of the earth as is evident from volcanic eruptions and the fact that earth harbours life which needs warmth to survive. The water element is intrinsically heated by the fire element as is evident from the fact that water taken out from deep wells during winter season is quite warm and the natural hot water springs have boiling water in them which is the opposite of the natural character of water of being cold, and also the fact that water has the inherent virtue of sustaining life which needs warmth as noted herein above.

The most visible form of these essential ingredients of life, i.e. heat, energy and warmth along with their accompanying light is the *Sun* in the sky. Whereas heat, energy and warmth are invisible factors of life, light is a visible factor. Since everything that has an existence is but a revelation of Brahman in that form, it follows that both the invisible aspects of life, such as these latent virtues of heat, energy and warmth present in the fire, water and earth, as well as the visible aspects, such as the sun, are revelations of the same Brahman. The sun is a 'formed form' of Brahman residing in the 'unformed form' of the same Brahman as the sky element. That is, since the sun has a physical shape and visibility, it represents the radiant and energetic virtues of Brahman that create 'heat, light and splendour', while its location in the sky is symbolic of the fact that this Brahman resides in the formless sky as its heart. The sky is visible because of the light of the sun, for no one can see the sky during the darkness of the night. In other words, the visible aspect of Brahman helps to establish the latter's presence even in its invisible and infinite form.

Again, the Upanishadic seer has chosen the sun as a metaphor of Brahman because it is the brightest object in the sky that has its own light. Also because the sun is rounded like the earth, it is a ball of fire like the fire element, and it simmers like water seen from a distance on the surface of a river during summer.]

3. The two elements—wind and space—are both formless. They are without a distinctive form or a definitive structure; they are attributeless and indefinable. They are therefore infinite and imperishable¹.

That which is infinite, immortal and imperishable is like the ambrosia of eternity called Amrit. Anything that is constantly on the move is pure and clean (because it does not get stagnated and subject to pollution; it retains its freshness and purity like the wind/air element).

These two elements (sky and wind) are invisible, out of sight and imperceptible; they can be known only by inference and indirect method; they are implicitly present in everything that exist².

Since Brahm has revealed itself in these two forms (sky and air), it forms the essence, the active consciousness, the energy, the glory and the magnificence of these two basic elements which are apparently attributeless and invisible by nature. Therefore they are the 'truth'. This is called the 'Adhidavic'³ or the divine and holistic vision of Brahm who is to be regarded as a revered God (3).

[Note—¹It has been explained in verse no. 2 that anything that has a form must have a birth when it was formed and shaped. Anything that has a beginning must have an end. But the two elements mentioned here, i.e. the sky and the wind/air, have no shape as such. They are formless. So they do not need to come to an end like their other brethren of verse no. 2, the fire, water and earth which have a form and are therefore perishable.

²Everything that has a physical existence must necessarily need some space to grow and develop. Therefore, the presence of the sky or space element is implicit in the growth and development of the visible creation. Fire burns in space and not within a solid; water needs the sky to make clouds and shower down upon the earth as the Amrit of life. The earth is dangling in the space of the sky and floats in and is supported by the air that fills this space. So though the 'space and wind' are not visible, their presence is implicitly and undeniably evident as said here.

³*Adhidavic* means that which pertain to the Gods or divinity. The air is always subtly moving in all the available space. Both the space as well as the air in it is invisible, but they are there nevertheless. So the existence of these two entities cannot be doubted. Since everything that exists is one or the other form of Brahm, the wind and the space are also a form of Brahm. And since these two entities are there for real, since they are not merely wild conceptions of the imaginative mind, therefore they are the 'truth'. Anything that is the truth is a manifestation of Brahm which is truth personified.]

4. Now, the 'Adhyatma**' (i.e. spiritual, metaphysical, that which pertains to the Atma or pure consciousness) view is being elucidated.

Those elements that are present inside the gross body of the creature, excepting the vital 'wind/air' element called the Pran and the 'sky' element present in all the available space in the body, i.e. the three elements besides these—viz. fire, water and earth, have assumed definitive forms and attributes characteristic of the body in which they live. Since they form an integral part of the body and are inseparable from it, they are as mortal and perishable as the body. That is, the gross body of a creature has been moulded by using these three elements. When the body decays and dies, these elements also decay and perish with their principal¹.

Therefore, these elements are formed (as the body), are mortal (like the body), are physically present in their gross form as revealed in the form of the gross body, and since they are physically there they are truthfully in existence (because they are visible, tangible, verifiable and ascertainable).

The 'eye'² is like the essence of this truth, it is at the core of this truth, because it is through the eye that one sees the body moulded from these elements (4).

[Note—¹The body is made up of all the five elements—sky, wind, fire, water and earth. The earth, which is the grossest of the five, forms its bones, skin and marrow etc. The water forms its fluid part such as the blood, mucous, lymph, semen etc. The fire keeps the body warm, energetic and invigorated. The wind/air element is present as the Pran or life giving vital winds in the body. And the sky is present as the various subtle spaces inside the body. When the body decays and dies, the first three elements, viz. earth, water and fire, perish with it, but the wind escapes into the space outside the body, and the sky too merges with the sky present outside the body.

In short, fire, water and earth are trapped in the *mould* in which the body is shaped, and they are *mortal* because they perish with the body.

²Please refer to canto 2 Brahmin 2 verse no. 2 in this context. The *eye* is the most important organ in the gross body. Without the eye, the Atma would not be able to see anything in this world, and therefore the Atma would remain ignorant of the external world. All the three elements referred to in this verse—fire, water and earth—are symbolically present in the eye. The remarkable point is that the subtle space (as distinct from the heavens represented by the upper eyelids as mentioned in the above quoted verse) and the wind elements are not described to be present in the eye.

**This is the *Adhyatma* form of worship of Brahm; it honours the latter in its spiritual form as the Atma which resides inside the body of the creature.]

5. Now that (form of Brahm which is the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic non-visible supreme entity symbolised by the sky and the wind elements) which has no forms or attributes is being described. The vital wind called Pran and the subtle space element called Akash present inside the gross body of the creature are both without a definitive form, shape and structure. They are attributeless and shapeless; are imperishable and immortal; are not static and always go on changing their location (i.e. are always on the move); and are invisible and imperceptible¹.

The essential factors that give these two entities their importance and value are personified as the Purush** (representing the vital faculty of sight; the vital powers, the magnificent potentials and the fantastic ability to 'see') living in the right eye of the body² (5).

[Note—¹The two elements which are described here—viz. the *wind/air* and *space* have four distinct characteristics—(a) they don't have a form, (b) they are imperishable, (c) they are on the move, and (d) they are invisible and imperceptible. On close examination we find that all these qualities do indeed apply to them.

(a) Though the *wind/air* element is present inside the body completely occupying the *space* inside it, it has no fixed shape and dimension because the space that it occupies itself has no fixed shape or dimension. It lives wherever there is available place for it to stay. (b) Both these elements are imperishable and immortal as described earlier in note to verse no. 2 above. (c) The wind present inside the body is not fixed at any one place and it moves through it in all available space that allows its free movement. Earlier in this canto in Brahmin 2, verse no. 19 we

have already seen that the wind moves in the seventy thousand ducts inside the body. Of course these ducts or Naadis are not vacant tubes, but even though they appear to be full of their natural contents for which they are meant, they still have enough 'space' to allow the vital 'wind' to have a free movement through their tiny pores. That is also why we often experience wind as flatulence moving in the abdominal space as compared to the water and fire elements which show no signs of physical movements inside the body. This is evident from the fact that blood constantly moves but its movement is never felt, and the fire is always present in the body but nobody feels its heat. (d) Obviously the wind and space are the two elements that cannot be seen as compared to the fire, water and earth elements.

²The *eye* has been depicted as being the site where the Purush is seated because it is through this organ the creature is able to see and be aware of the world and its opportunities. Even as the celestial Sun is the abode of this Purush representing the manifested macrocosmic form of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the eye is this Sun's microcosmic counterpart.

The celestial Sun lives in the sky surrounded by the cosmic wind, and it represents the other three elements, viz. fire, water and earth as described in verse no. 2-3 above. It lights up the vast realm by its light, thereby removing the fathomless darkness that engulfs the entire creation. Similarly, the eye of the creature's body serves the same function, and verse no. 2 of Brahmin 2 as well as verse no. 4 of this present Brahmin above describe its significance.

The potential divine powers and magnificence of the eye, the importance and significance that it has for the creature is symbolised in the fact that it is said to be the seat of Brahm himself as the Purush residing in it.

*The use of the word *Purush* in this verse is very meaningful — because it refers to the Viraat Purush to indicate the fact that it is through the faculty of sight that Brahm could see this creation. This Viraat Purush, according to metaphysics, is the gross macrocosmic body of the creation and it is this body which is the source from which the rest of the cosmos was moulded or created or manifested. That is, the entire creation, both visible and invisible, is a manifested or revealed form of this Viraat Purush.

The word Purush meanwhile means 'one who lives in a body'; here it means the Brahm who has taken up residence in the gross body of the creature at the micro level and in the Viraat Purush at the macro level. This Brahm pervades throughout them in a uniform way even as the sky and the wind element occupy all available space in the creation in a uniform manner. That is also why sky is considered as a nearest analogy of Brahm because even the other all-pervading element, the wind/air, is present in this sky and not outside of it. That is, nothing exists outside Brahm.]

6. [Now, the form of that divine, mystical and sublime Supreme Being present subtly in the right eye as the Purush** which empowers the creature to 'see' and observe life in this gross visible world is being described here—]

That divine, mystical Purush has a complexion which resembles a cloth dyed in saffron, or a woolen cloth coloured like turmeric or any

other yellow dye, or as 'Indra Gop' (a red coloured insect found in the rainy season)¹.

That Purush resembles the leaping flame or a tongue of fire, or a white lotus, or the dazzle and splendour of a streak of lightening².

A person who is wise and enlightened enough to realise this form of the Viraat Purush, acquires magnificent fame, unmatched honour, great glory, stupendous majesty and worldwide renown, virtues collectively called his 'Sri', which spread in all the directions uniformly with the same sparkle, dazzle, brilliance and splendour as that of lightening.

Now, Brahm has been described using the words 'Neti-neti' (i.e. not this, not that)—this is the best definition of the supreme transcendental Brahm. Nothing describes Brahm better than this phrase Neti-neti. This is the express declaration of the Vedas.

Brahm is also called 'the greatest of the great Truths', 'the essence of the Truth', 'the gist, the extract, the refined element of the Truth'.

Verily, the Pran (the vital wind; the pure consciousness, the Atma, the soul, the spirit; the life-infusing spark in the body; the breath; the vitality and strength that enables the otherwise lifeless body to show signs of life) is the Truth. And verily, that Brahm is the 'truth' of this Pran³ (6).

[Note—¹This attractive form of *Purush* having a pleasant personality is symbolic of the manifested form of the divine as visible in its various multi-coloured myriad variations representing Nature in its most resplendent and vibrant colours.

²This vision of *Purush* relates to the macrocosmic form from the Vedanta perspective which stresses that Brahm is so majestic and radiant that it cannot be seen with the naked eye but only be experienced, witnessed and deduced by inference. The lightening in the sky is so blindingly dazzling that it is impossible to watch it with naked eye, especially when it strikes the earth, unless of course one wishes to become blind in the eye and made deaf in the ear by its dazzlingly blinding brilliance and deafening thunder respectively. The presence of 'lightening in the sky' however cannot be denied when it streaks across the sky because of the splendorous and dazzling light as well as the thudding and reverberating sound of thunder caused by it. Likewise, Brahm cannot be denied when one considers the fact that the creation did come into being from 'something' as nothing can come into existence from nothing, though that 'something' is not distinctly known. The very fact that the creation is 'here' proves that that 'something' must have been 'there' at the beginning, and that that 'something' is now 'here' in the form of the creation.

³In other words, since the *Pran* is the only entity or factor that determines whether the body is alive or not, and it is therefore present in all things that have 'life' in them, and since this Pran itself is a name given to the wind/air element that pervades the entire space of the sky which is the subtlest element in creation, and since this wind/air element has emanated from the cosmic Brahm at the beginning of creation, and since the Pran derives its life-giving abilities and powers to move from its parent cause, the Brahm, it follows that Brahm is at the heart and soul of Pran much like the battery inside a toy that runs it.

Again, since Brahm and life are synonymous, since Pran and life are also synonymous with each other, and since life is witnessed and experienced by all and there is no doubt as to its truthfulness, it follows that Pran is a truthful entity, and therefore the origin of Pran must also

be truthful. That is, Brahm, which is the origin of Pran, is the ultimate truth because one creates an offspring in one's own likeness.

**The *Purush* referred to here is the vital life present in the eye that enables the eye to see and observe the visible world. It also refers to the symbolic eye of wisdom and enlightenment that enables a man to learn the great mysterious secrets of creation, Nature and his own self. Refer also to Canto 5, Brahmin 5, verse nos. 2, 4.]

Canto 2 Brahmin 4

[This section contains the dialogue between Maitreyi and sage Yagyavalkya in which the sage preaches his wife the great truths about the Atma before he took to Sanyas, i.e. the life of a reclusive hermit. This Brahmin is almost identical to Canto 4, Brahmin 5.]

1. Sage Yagyavalkya said to his wife Maitreyi, 'Oh Maitreyi! I want to rise above my present state of existence (i.e. I wish to leave my householder phase of life and take the vows of Sanyas; that is, I wish to spend the rest of my life as a renunciate ascetic, a friar or a reclusive monk or a hermit). Therefore, I wish to partition or distribute whatever material wealth that I have as a householder between you and my second wife Katyayani' (1).

2. Maitreyi enquired, 'Oh Lord! Even if I become the owner of all the riches and material comforts and wealth of this earth, will I get immortality? Will I get to drink the ambrosia of eternal peace, bliss and happiness?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'No, your life will be like that of people who are rich and well off. But you should not expect immortality by worldly riches; you cannot expect to drink that ambrosia that gives eternal peace, bliss and happiness by them' (2).

3. Maitreyi said, 'What will I do with that wealth which does not give immortality and provide me with the ambrosia called Amrit that bestows eternity and supreme bliss; what will I do with that worldly wealth that does not give eternal peace and everlasting happiness? Oh Lord! If you know of some way by which this ambrosia (Amrit) can be made available to me (or can be accessed by me), then please do tell me (or preach me) about it (instead of giving me world riches)' (3).

4. Yagyavalkya replied, 'Oh beloved! You are very dear to me, and speak words that please me. Come and sit. I shall preach you about that essential ambrosia of which you are so eager to know about. You should then follow my instructions' (4).

5. Sage Yagyavalkya then began to preach his wife Maitreyi—'Certainly a 'wife' loves a her husband not for the sake of his prospective pleasure and satisfaction, for his own sake and welfare, or to fulfill his hopes,

expectations, aspirations and desires that he might have, but to satisfy her own self-interest¹.

Similarly, a 'husband' loves his wife for his own sake, and not for her sake with the objective of satisfying the various hopes and aspirations of the wife and providing her the pleasure and comfort of being cared for and loved².

This situation can be extended to all the persons with whom a person interacts in this world. For example, a 'son' is dear to his father not for the son's own sake, but for the self-interest of the father³.

'Wealth' is not dear to a man to enhance the value and importance of the wealth, but because it gives the man worldly comfort, pleasure, prestige and honour⁴.

'Brahmins' (learned and wise elderly people) are not dear to a man for their own sake, but because they serve the self-interest of the man⁵.

A 'Kshatriya' likes to acquire strength, valour, authority and powers to enhance his own value, his own abilities and serve his own interest rather than to honour the virtue of 'Shakti' for its own sake⁶.

The 'world' and its things are dear to a man because they serve his vested interest, and not because he wishes to serve the world selflessly. A person loves 'another person', or for that matter any living being or creature because he gets some benefit from the latter, because some of his interests are served by that living being, and not because the person loves all and everyone in a dispassionate way, for had it been so he would also have loved his enemy⁷.

The 'Gods' are dear and honoured because they serve the self-interest of a person, and not because they are exalted, honourable and venerable beings who are divine and have supernatural powers⁸.

In fact, all the living beings are dear to anyone because in some way or the other they serve a person's personal interest⁹.

In short it can be said that anything or anyone is dear to another, or one pays any attention to them simply because they serve his self-interest, are of any use to him one way or the other. No one would pay any heed to the other if the latter is of no utility to the former.

So, oh dear Maitreyi, it is only the pure conscious Atma or soul that is worthy of being seen as a holy and divine entity, called having its divine Darshan, is worthy of hearing about, called its Sravan, and is worthy of contemplation, meditation, experiencing and witnessing, called its Matya (because it is a selfless and sincere companion). And all this is possible by having a truthful and analytical knowledge of it, called Atma's Vigyan.

By knowing this Atma, one knows all that is worth knowing¹⁰ (6).

[Note--¹It is certain that a *wife* loves her husband to satisfy and fulfill certain of her own desires, aspirations, hopes and expectations, and not simply because she wishes to fulfill or satisfy the desires, aspirations, hopes and expectations of the husband in a selfless manner. That is, the wife serves her husband because she has some expectations from him; she serves him with some kind of selfish motive, and not because she selflessly wishes to keep the husband satisfied without bothering about her own interests. For example, a wife expects children from her husband, she expects him to take care of her worldly needs, and she expects so many other things from him. A husband must fulfill all of them in order to keep the wife happy and satisfied.

²Likewise, the *husband* loves his wife for some or the other self interest that he has; he loves his wife for some subtle selfish ends, and not just for the sake of loving his wife, or for the satisfaction of his wife alone. That is, both the husband and the wife love each other for their own sake and not for the other. For example, a man loves his wife as she would raise a family for him, satisfy his sexual instincts and take care of his other routine daily needs, such as washing and cleaning, cooking and looking after the nitty-gritty of humdrum life of the household so that he is freed to concentrate on his profession and business. Similarly, the wife loves her husband because he provides for her and looks after her safety. If either of them fails to deliver, there is tension between them.

³A father does not selflessly love his *son* for the son's personal sake, but because the father has some vested interest in him. The father loves him for his own sake, such as the fact that the son will take care of him in his old age, will look after his business and household affair, will increase the assets that he has generated in his lifetime, and would not only protect them but also enhance them, and will help in spreading the good name and fame of the father. The father loves his son because he sees in him his future comfort and prospects of carrying on with his legacy. The son looks up to his father for care, education and financial support as well as gaining practical advice so that he can stand on his two feet in this world. Neither of them would love the other if their self interest is not addressed. It's a sort of symbiotic relationship.

⁴Similarly, a man loves *money and wealth* for his own selfish needs, and not for any benefits that the money or the wealth might get because of his paying attention to them or their association with him. If that money or asset proves to be a thorn on his side or a burden on his shoulder or mind, causing him unnecessary alarm or harm, and they present any kind of threat for him, he would immediately and inevitably throw such asset away. He sticks to worldly assets only as long as these assets give him some kind of profit or benefit, some sort of pleasure and comfort; if these assets caused the slightest of harm in his personal interests, he would abandon them; he would have nothing to do with them. For example, if a man is caught by police with a bag full of stolen gold coins, he would immediately dump it and disown ownership. Similarly, when a particular material item of wealth is possessed by a celebrity, it acquires great value and importance than what it would have had if possessed by an ordinary man. But that celebrity acquires it for his own convenience and not to promote the value and importance of that particular thing.

⁵A man respects, honours, reveres and worships a *Brahmin* (i.e. a learned man who is usually well-versed in the scriptures) and *Gyan* (knowledge, erudition, scholarship, expertise and skills) that the Brahmin possesses for his own personal sake because he benefits from them, and not for their personal sake, such as to honour them or raise them to an exalted stature even if they fail to serve the man. Brahmins preside over fire sacrifices and other religious rituals; they help to perform many sacraments and religious ceremonies. They preach and teach the scriptures and explain their practical usage; they act as moral guides. Gyan helps make life easy, comfortable and enjoyable for a man. Had it not been for these benefits, no one would have bothered either to respect a Brahmin or pursue Gyan. A Brahmin who does not serve the purpose designated for a Brahmin, or any knowledge that is useless, harmful and not conducive to man's happiness and comforts, are shunned and abhorred by him. No one would like to honour a Brahmin if he cannot perform the duties of a wise man; no one would acquire skills and learn any knowledge if that is not relevant to his needs and conducive to his well being.

For example, with acquisition of knowledge and skill, collectively called Gyan, a man benefits in various ways, such as acquiring more wealth and fame. His wisdom and erudition is sought by all, making him much in demand and renowned. Similarly, Brahmins are respected because they give him good and wise advice, acting as learned teachers and moral preceptors, and presiding over various religious

ceremonies. If for example a Brahmin, who is permanently engaged by a king to perform certain duties, fails to perform them, then he is relegated to the background and the king employs another man in his place.

⁶*Kshatriyas* (the warrior class in society whose main job is to give protection to rest of the society) and *Shakti* (i.e. the virtues of energy, strength, power, valour, authority etc.) are respected and endeared by a man for his own selfish ends, and not for their own sake. That is, a man obeys the Kshatriya race or any person who has strength, power, authority and potential because the former gets protection from the latter. In case this is not true, for instance when the Kshatriya class becomes cruel and uses its powers to torment other sections of the society, the people begin to loathe them; they begin to hate them and conspire to dethrone the Kshatriya King. No authority, no matter how strong and powerful, is respected by anyone if it is inimical to a person's own interests. A person's self interest is of top priority for him.

The warrior Kshatriya class honours the quality of strength, powers, vitality, valour, potentials and energy because these virtues help this class to remain powerful and dominant in society. They aid the Kshatriya in acquiring worldly fame and glory as well as majesty and grandeur, pomp and ceremony. If the Kshatriya is in no need of them, for example when he is serving as a clerk in an office instead of the army, or when he has taken the vows of a monk for example, then he would not give these virtues their due respect because he no longer needs them.

⁷A person loves the *world* because it serves his own interests, and not because the world would benefit because of his service or because he loves it. A man loves and serves the world because he derives so many benefits from it; the world gives him joy and comfort. But if the world fails to do so, the man would start hating the same world that he had loved so much just a little while ago. He would prefer death than to live in the same world which he had adored a few moments ago, and for which he would have staked everything that he could.

⁸The *Gods* are dear to a man because he benefits from them, and not simply because of their own sake. A man offers prayers and oblations to Gods because he expects that they would help him in his life, they would remove all his worries and hurdles in life as well as the different causes of his troubles in this world, and he expects that they would come to his aid during times of emergency. That is, he expects benevolence, magnanimity and blessings from them so that his life becomes blissful and happy, pleasurable, comfortable and enjoyable in this world. But the same man would shun those Gods if they turn hostile and malevolent towards him. No one would worship a hostile or malignant 'Nakshatra' or Star. First he would try to please such harmful Stars, but if this still does not help him in his life, he would engage a priest and perform religious rituals to overcome or subdue these Stars. If the Gods become malevolent then the same man who has been offering oblations and worship to them begins to accuse these Gods for his miseries and torments. Say for example, when there is an epidemic or famine, the people accuse the Gods of not being kind to them inspite of their offering them so many gifts and sacrifices.

⁹All *living beings* are loved because a person derives some kind of benefit from them, and not simply for their own sake, or for the sake of loving them. Such as the case of a wife, husband, son, world, animal, Brahmin, Gyan, Kshatriya, Shakti, Gods and the Vedas cited above.

In short, everything and everybody is loved and liked and respected and honoured by a man because each and every one of them gives some kind of benefit to him. The man will have nothing to do with any one of them if it was not for his own self interest, or if he had not benefited from them in any way.

¹⁰When one becomes wise enough to realise the fact mentioned in the last stanza—that the Atma is the only entity worthy of respect and worship, one has become 'realised'; he has 'seen the non-dual nature of the world'. He has understood that the same Atma is present inside his wife and others as it is present in his own bosom. With this erudition and wisdom, the very notion that 'I love him because I

have some benefit to derive from the other person' loses all meaning and locus standi because a person treats the other person on the same footing as his own self. He does not have to derive any benefit from some other person, and instead of the notion of 'me and him' the view changes to 'Me and I'. Then such a man need not treat others with any kind of distinction. He also need not love or hate anyone, for he loves others as much as he loves himself. Further, he does not serve anyone else because he has to derive some sort of benefit from him, or some benefit has been transferred from the other person to him, because the other person is also an image of his own self. Just like no one can derive benefit from himself for himself, it is similarly impossible to derive any benefit from the other person because the Atma residing in that other person is the same as the Atma residing in the bosom of one's own self.

This 'Atma' is the truthful identity of the man, therefore there is no distinction between the man and the other person represented by his wife, her husband, the son, his father, the animal or livestock, the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the other living creature of the world, the Gods as well as the knowledge contained in the Vedas. This is because the knowledge contained in the Vedas as meant for the benefit of the Atma and not the body. Since the Atma of all the creature is the same, the benefit of the knowledge or Gyan contained in the Vedas are meant uniformly for all. Therefore, such a man would automatically love all living beings, without any distinction of religion, caste, creed, gender, colour of skin etc., because the same Atma lives in all of them.

The Atma is a selfless pure entity that is at the core of everything that exists in this world. In other words, the Atma is the 'core truth' while the rest of the world is a hollow outer shell. One eats the fruit and discards the shell or peels off the skin; one should similarly accept the truthful Atma and discard the falsehood-riddled world. Except the Atma, the rest of the gross world has no relevance to the self-interest of the creature. It is the Atma that serves the self-interest of a man because it gives him eternal bliss and felicity as well as everlasting joy and happiness.

Hence, if a husband loves his wife because he sees the same Atma that he has in his own body as being present in his wife, then he would not love another person from whom he has certain things to extract or recover or take back but as his own image in the form of a lady called a wife. It is an established fact that everyone loves his own self most dearly. So the husband, and for that matter all the people mentioned in this verse, would be loving 'themselves' when they love others in their own image instead of as some other person who is different from them.

A wise person who has realised this very fact—that the Atma is selfless and is the only entity which is worthy of praise, worship and honour—is able to rise above this distorted view of seeing 'self interest' as being different from the 'general interest' of all the living creatures of this creation.

Upanishadic philosophy exhorts its followers to follow the *three steps to Truth*— (i) hear the Truth, (ii) contemplate and meditate upon the Truth, and then (iii) reach the Truth, accomplish and implement this Truth.]

6. Those who think that Brahm, in all its various magnificent manifestations, resides in anything other than the Atma are forsaken by all. [That is, such ignorant persons are not shown any respect in the society. They are avoided by all, and treated as fools.]

For example, those who regard Brahmins (learned and wise men who are considered as Gyan or truthful knowledge personified) as being distinct and separate from the Atma are forsaken by the Brahmins¹.

Those who regard Kshatriyas (the warrior class who personify the qualities of power, authority, courage, stamina, strength and valour etc.) as being distinct and separate from the Atma are abandoned by the

Kshatriyas². Similarly, those who regard the Lokas (the different worlds, such as the household, the business world, the world of friends etc.) as being different and separate from the Atma are forsaken by them³.

Those who regard the Gods as having a separate and distinct existence from the Atma (or from the supreme Brahm whose image the Atma is) would be abandoned and forsaken by the Gods⁴.

If he sees the Vedas as having a distinct existence from his Atma, the Vedas also forsake him⁵.

Those who see the various 'Bhuts' (creatures) as being different and separate from the Atma are forsaken by the latter⁶.

That is, all the spiritual knowledge that is embodied in the person of the Brahmin, all the qualities of strength, vitality and potentials that are represented by the Kshatriyas, the entire creation represented by the various Lokas (the worlds), all the divine qualities and noble virtues in creation represented by the exalted Gods, and the great virtues of humility and service which are represented by the humble and ordinary creatures (Bhuts) of this creation—all of them forsake a stupid person who ignorantly and foolishly sees anything else except the Atma in all of them. In other words, there is nothing here that is not Atma⁷ (7).

[Note—¹He who treats *Brahm* (the transcendental supreme authority of creation which is the absolute and irrefutable Truth and Reality) and the virtues of *Gyan* (knowledge) as being distinct and separate from the Atma (the pure conscious soul), both Brahm and Gyan forsake him. Such people are denied the benefit of enlightened advice and moral guidance that learned *Brahmins* who personify both Brahm as well as Gyan give to the people; such people are swamped by ignorance and delusions.

²In a similar vein, if one treats the *Kshatriya*, the strong, powerful and authoritative ruling class in society representing the virtues of strength, valour, power, authority, stamina and potentials (collectively called Bal—बल), as having a separate and distinct identity from the Atma, then the Kshatriyas, or the virtues of strength, valour, potentials authority and majesty that they represent, also forsakes such as person. That is, strength and valour elude them; they lack courage and stamina to face adversities. They fear unnecessarily from the world because they lack self confidence that is the hallmark of the omnipotent Atma.

³Likewise, a person who sees the *Lokas*, i.e. the different worlds and their inhabitant creatures as being different from the Atma, is abandoned by the Lokas. This is because he would invariably have some degree of the sense of jealousy, envy, insecurity and competition with others; this would cause heartburn and fears which in their wake snatch his peace and tranquility. Such a man who thinks that the other person is his competitor does not treat him with the equanimity, love, compassion and fortitude that is displayed by a person who treats everyone as his brother and compatriot because he knows that the Atma in him and in the other person is the same entity.

⁴Similarly, if he sees the *Gods* other than in the form of his Atma, they also abandon him because they regard him as haughty, egoistic, proud and arrogant; such people are considered by the Gods as fallen from the holy path marked by piety and humility as well as characterised by truthful knowledge, self-realisation, enlightenment and profound wisdom and erudition. That is, the Gods who represent the various forces of Nature and the different divine qualities and auspicious faculties present in the man himself, would refuse to obey and oblige him. In other words, he would lose his natural command over the sense organs in which the primary Gods are said to have their residence.

⁵If he sees the *Vedas* as having a distinct existence from his Atma, the Vedas also forsake him because he has not understood the tenets and fundamental principal teaching of the Vedas and defame the holy name of the scriptures by pretending to be an expert in the holy scriptures. People think that a person who has studied the Vedas exemplifies their tenets, and they look up to him for guidance and as an example to emulate. If he has not imbibed their teaching in spirit, then he sets a bad example for the society, and therefore the Vedas distance themselves from such a vile man who defames and defiles them.

⁶Similarly, if he treats all the living *creatures* of this creation as being different and distinct from his own Atma, or his pure self, such a person is also forsaken by these creatures. This is because he would distinguish between them and this would cause ill-will and jealousy amongst them. The consequence is that those whom he shows less favour would abandon him in favour of a person who gives them their due respect and place in society.

⁷In this simple way we conclude that all the entities—Brahmin representing Gyan (knowledge), Kshatriyas representing Bal (strength and valour, power and authority), the Lokas represented by their creatures, and the Gods represented by their glorious and divine virtues, potentials, majesty and authority—are components of this creation, and are one or the other form of the same entity known as the Atma. There is indeed nothing besides the Atma.

This is the *non-dual* approach propounded and expounded by the Upanishads. Whatever that exists consists basically of one fundamental unit known as the Atma. It is at the core of everything that exists. All dichotomies and schisms that exist are due to the ignorance about this one basic fact. This ignorance leads to the conception of duality, such as the concept of ‘you’ and ‘me’. This misconception of the reality is at the root cause of all sought of agitations and restlessness in the mind of a man. This ‘not dual’ approach about creation also leads to eternal peace and tranquility for the soul; it enhances self confidence and well being in a man because then he has no enemies, no opponents, no contenders, and no competitors against whom he has to struggle. It helps to overcome all causes of hatred, animosity, jealousy and other such negative emotions that cloud a man’s mental radar, thereby eclipsing his peace, happiness and bliss.

‘Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in you?’ (Holy Bible, Corinthians, 1/3/8.); ‘I will dwell in them and walk with them’ (Holy Bible, Corinthians, 11/6/16.); ‘We are (all) the children of God’ (Holy Bible, Romans, 8/16.); ‘If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another’. (Holy Bible, John, 1/4/11.)

7. [In the following verses, the example of the kettledrum, the conch and Indian lute is taken to highlight the fact that the Atma can be realised by the person himself and not by any other person on his behalf.]

It is not possible for any ordinary man to grasp (understand or stop) the sound emanating and radiating out from a kettledrum when it is beaten (by a stick)—for it is only the player of the drum who can grasp it (i.e. understand the finer tunes or notes of this form of music or sound emanating from the instrument, and stop them if he so wishes), or it is the kettledrum itself which can do it (i.e. it is this instrument which has this natural quality to produce that sound when it is beaten, and therefore it is the one that can stop it if it decides to do so by becoming out of tune or getting broken)¹ (8).

[Note—¹The *sound* emanating from the *kettledrum* can be stopped by the player when he stops to beat the drum. No one else other than the player of the

musical instrument known as the kettledrum is able to stop the sound of music emanating from that instrument when it is struck, because that sound or music can be stopped when the musician decides to do so. Since sound cannot be physically caught hold of by anyone, the only method to stop that sound is to stop beating the kettledrum. Only the musician can do so. Therefore, the sound emanating from the kettledrum can be stopped only by the musician when he stops beating it, and not by anyone in the audience.

It can also be stopped by the kettledrum itself such as the case when it gets broken for example.

Similarly, the pure consciousness and divine qualities of the Atma can be realised by the man when he himself endeavours to do so. The Atma can be understood and witnessed by contemplation and meditation on it by the person himself. Once enlightenment dawns in him, the light of pure consciousness shines through his entire being. No external aid is needed for it. A person can understand or grasp the Atma or the pure consciousness that it symbolises by being conscious, aware and enlightened about it; by focusing one's attention and energy in unraveling it, realizing it and deciphering it.

Here the 'kettledrum' is likened to the Atma; the pure consciousness emanating and radiating out from the Atma is the 'sound of music' coming out from the kettledrum; concentration, meditation and contemplation upon that Atma to unravel the pure consciousness emanating or effusing out from it and radiating in all the directions is like the beating of the kettledrum by the player; the aspirant who contemplates and meditates upon the Atma is like the player of the drum; and not paying attention to and remaining unaware of the super conscious energy vibrating and pulsating inside the bosom of a creature is like the person who cannot understand the meaning of the sound emanating from the kettledrum as its music and therefore unable to grasp it.

In other words, even as a musician is the only person who is able to decipher and understand the meaning of the sound coming out from the musical instrument known as the kettledrum, only a wise and enlightened person is able to experience and witness the pulsating energy of consciousness emanating from and radiating out from the Atma residing in his bosom. Just like the kettledrum in itself is inactive and produces the sound only when it is beaten by the stick, the consciousness present inside the seeker is made available to him only when he diligently endeavours to experience and witness it. If he does not try to become acquainted with the consciousness residing inside his own bosom, the latter would not make it self known to him on its own even as the sound will not come out from the kettledrum if it is not beaten by the musician though it is inherently present in it.]

8. [The allegory of a conch is used here.] Similarly, the sound emanating from the conch when it is blown can be grasped (understood or stopped) by either the blower of that conch or by the conch itself, and by no one else¹ (8).

[Note—¹The sound of the conch can be stopped by the blower of the conch when he stops blowing air into it, and by no one else. That is, the only way to stop the conch from producing the sound is to stop blowing air into it, and this can be done by the person who is blowing the conch. If another person attempts to physically stop the sound emanating from the conch, he will not be able to stop it, no matter how much he tries, except to request the conch blower to stop blowing air into it.

Similarly, only an expert blower knows what a particular type of sound coming from the conch means, as in olden days this was used to send coded signals during wars or between guards who guarded the gates of forts. In the same manner, the Atma can be grasped—understood and

realised, its stupendous energy harnessed and cultivated—only by sincere effort undertaken by the seeker himself and by no other means.]

The other way to stop that sound is when the conch gets broken or fractured. In other words, it can be stopped by the conch itself.

The meaning and implication of this verse is the same as that which is applicable to the kettledrum in verse no. 7 above.]

9. [The allegory of an Indian lute is used here.] Similarly, the music or sound emanating from an Indian lute is grasped (understood or stopped) by the player of that instrument or by the instrument itself, and by no body else (9).

[Note--¹The sound in the form of music that is emanating from the lute is comprehended by the player of the instrument and not by any other person not well versed in music, and it can also be stopped when the player decides to do so and by no one else. Similarly, the sound of music is stopped if the lute gets broken or gets out of tune. In the same manner, the pure consciousness of the Atma can be realised by a sincere aspirant himself by his own diligent efforts and not by any other external means.

The sound is literally caught from proceeding ahead by the player of the lute if he stops playing the instrument, or by the lute itself if any of its parts are broken, or if it gets out of tune. No other person can 'hold' the sound from either emanating from the lute or spreading out from it.

The meaning and implication of this verse is the same as that which is applicable to the kettledrum or the conch in verse nos. 7 & 8 above.]

10. Even as a fire kindled with wet firewood produces smoke that springs forth from its different points and move out in different directions, the Rig, Yajur, Sam and Atharva Vedas, the various Itihases and Purans (mythological and traditional histories of the Hindus), the knowledge of the Upanishads, Shlokas (hymns or sacred verses and stanzas of the scriptures), Sutra (formulas, tenets and doctrines, principles, axioms and maxims of the scriptures), Vyakhyan (episodes, narratives, citations and their explanations and discourses based upon them) etc.—are all equivalent to the 'breath' of that eclectic, exalted, divine, supreme and transcendental Authority (known as Brahm) (10).

11. The ocean is the resting place for all forms of water on this earth¹. The skin is the path or medium through which all the senses or perceptions of touch are felt or perceived. [Without the skin, one cannot feel the sense of touch.] Similarly, the nose is the organ which is the reception center for all perceptions of smell, the tongue is for the perception of taste, the eye for all forms of shapes, colours, contours and physical forms in this world, and the ear is for all the perceptions of sound.

Similarly, the Mana (mind and heart) is the fount of all Sankalps. [That is, the mind and the heart are the centres from where all the volitions, determination, vows, aspiration etc. that a creature has or makes originate.] The heart is the residing place of all Vidya (knowledge). [That is why we say 'learn by heart' and not 'by mind'! A person learns anything when he has his heart or interest in it.]

The hands are the doer of all deeds; the genitals are the enjoyers of all the sensual pleasures; the excretory organs (e.g. rectum and urinary

bladder) are the resting places for all residual products in the body and the instruments by which they are eliminated; the legs are the basis which lead one on different paths; and the faculty of speech is the vehicle or foundation upon which rests all the Vedas² (11).

[Note :- ¹Rivers, streams, seas and underground water—ultimately all fall and merge with the vast reservoir of water known as the *ocean*, and then become one with it. The ocean is the primary source of water because its water evaporates during the day under the sunlight to form the clouds which fall down back upon the earth in the form of rain which in turn supplies water to the soil replenishing underground water channels as well as feeding the rivers and the streams on earth. These, together with melted water from the glaciers, finally open into the ocean, thereby completing the cycle.

In terms of metaphysics, this is the circuit the Atma follows. It is from Brahm, which is like the ocean, that the Atma, which is like the water, has originated, then gone to take a dwelling as the Gods in the heavens, who can be compared to the clouds, then taking up residence in a body of the creature here on earth much like the rain falling down upon the earth and taking up its residence in the different water bodies here, and finally dying and reverting back to its primary source, the Brahm, which is like the water of the river etc. falling back into the ocean.

²The glory and propagation of the knowledge of the *Vedas* depend upon speech, because in ancient time Vedas were learnt, chanted, repeated and transmitted orally from one generation to another, and not in the written form of the latter period in history when one could learn them even without the use of the voice. But the Mantras of the Vedas needed to be recited aloud in order to make them effective, and so even when the Vedas came into existence in their written form, they needed to be chanted or recited with a particular incantation and musical rhythm. The Vedas needed to be explained, thereby necessitating the use of the faculty of speech.]

12. Even as a lump of salt put in water completely dissolves and vanishes in it, leaving no trace behind, and no matter how hard one tries it cannot be retrieved or grasped or seen again in its original, crude form as a lump of salt, and this water will always taste salty, the Atma—which is a most majestic and magnificent entity that has such divine and eclectic attributes as being eternal, infinite and without any measurement as well as being a fount of Vigyan (the best of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment)—too dissolves itself to become inseparably one with the elements of creation that have taken shape as the body of the creature. It does not retain any separate identity or characteristic which is distinct from the body in which it resides. When the body dies, or when the Atma gives up its notion of having a body, it finds freedom from the fetters that had been shackling it to the gross body consisting of the elements. It rises higher and gets detached from this body made of the various sense organs. At that time it has no attributes, no definitions, no designations and no specific signs that can be assigned to it, and neither does it have any name. [This is because it merges with the wind/air element and the sky element present outside the body after discarding the fetters of the body and coalesces with these primary elements to become one with and indistinguishable from them. It is only the body that has a name, a form, any special attributes, any

specific designation and stature by which a person is recognised in this world, and shows any signs that it is alive or not. The Atma is already super conscious and it does not need any certificates from anybody to vouch for its supremacy.]’

This is what sage Yagyavalkya said to his wife Maitreyi (12).

[Note—The *Atma* lives in the body of the individual creature. The body is made up of the five basic elements of creation—viz. sky, wind, fire, water and earth. Though the Atma is basically infinite and eternal, attributeless and unqualified, but when it takes up residence in the body of the creature it becomes indistinguishable from it. As a result, it exhibits all the characteristics that are exhibited by the individual creature so much so that ignorant people think that the Atma is the physical body of the creature. When the body dies, this Atma is released from it and then no trace of it is left behind. See also note to Canto 4, Brahmin 5, verse no. 13.

From the metaphysical point of view, this state can be achieved even while the man is alive—it happens when he becomes enlightened about his true self and detaches himself from getting emotionally and mentally involved in this world and abstains from gratifying his body and its sense organs. It is then that the Atma is released from its burden of ignorance and delusions which prevents it from realising its true self. Once enlightenment comes, freedom is a natural corollary.

Taking the example of the *salt* which could actually be seen and felt before it dissolved in water, this majestic and supreme *Atma* can also be ascertained by having proper level of knowledge and erudition about it by deeply studying the scriptures. Then one would know that the body has life in it because of the presence of pure consciousness, or Atma, in it just like the fact that the water tastes salty because of the presence of salt in it. Then this Atma can be experienced, witnessed, perceived and literally observed by experience while it is still inside the body of the creature by proper wisdom and erudition just like the presence of salt can be witnessed in salty water. But once the salt dissolves in the water, it spreads uniformly in the whole body of that water, and then it is impossible to physically see it. Similarly, the Atma of an individual creature, when it takes up residence in the creature’s physical body, becomes inseparable and indistinguishable from it, and therefore cannot be separately observed. But even as the presence of salt in water is convincingly ascertained when one tastes it personally, i.e. when one experiences its salty taste himself, the presence of the conscious Atma can also be ascertained by personal experience and not by being taught by others or by reading voluminous scriptures. In fact, this is called ‘Jivan Mukti’ or being liberated from the fetters of ignorance while one is still alive. Then, at the time of death, the body is naturally discarded and the Atma is physically liberated from the limitations of the physical gross body, and it merges with the cosmic Atma in the form of the transcendental Soul that is ever present everywhere. This form of liberation is called ‘Videha Mukti’ or the actual deliverance from the shackles of the physical body.

Once the boundary of the body is removed at the time of death, the Atma in the form of the vital life infusing conscious factors called Pran leaves the body and coalesces with the all-pervading wind/air outside just like the air inside a mud pot imperceptibly and without any fuss escapes from it and merges with the air outside the pot when the pot is broken.

This Atma is called the ‘spirit’ because it is the essence of all that is living inside the body of the creature.]

13. Maitreyi said, ‘Oh Lord! By saying that after death of the physical body, the great and mysterious Atma does not have any attributes, any designations, any specific signs that can be assigned to define it, and it has got no name—this statement of yours has put me to great confusion and doubts’.

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘No Maitreyi, I have not said anything to create confusion or perplexity in your mind. Rather, whatever I have said to you is to make you aware of the ‘truth and reality’ of that stupendous, glorious, majestic, most mysterious and strange supreme Authority which is beyond comprehension of an ordinary person. Oh dear, it is sufficient to enlighten one about the holistic and sublime knowledge which pertains to that supreme transcendental Authority’ (13).

[Note--Please refer to verse no. 12 above and its note for elaboration as to why the sage was so sure that what he has taught his wife is the definitive knowledge of the Atma and there is no confusion or any scope of doubt in it. See also Brahmin 3, verse no. 6 of this canto. It says in its concluding part that ‘Neti-neti’—that is ‘not this, not that’—is the best definition of Brahm because there is nothing in this creation with which it can be compared; there are no words that can define it in its entirety. As it is said ‘the proof of the taste of the pudding is in its eating’, the only way to prove the truthfulness of these statements is to experience the Atma by means of contemplation and meditation, by research and deep insight. This concept of ‘Neti-Neti’ to describe the Atma has been a constant refrain in the Upanishads. Refer also to Canto 4, Brahmin 2, verse no. 4; Canto 4, Brahmin 4, verse no. 22; and Canto 4, Brahmin 5, verse no. 15. Refer also to the Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

Brahmin 4, verse no. 6 of this canto describes that all that exist in any form whatsoever in this creation is nothing else but Brahm manifested in these forms. Verse no. 12 gives the classical example of salt dissolving in water which basically stresses that when we drink salty water we realise that salt is present in it, but those who have not drunk it would not believe when they are told that the water contains salt in it because they have the knowledge of water only from what they have read about it from text books.

There is another way of looking at it. When a person sees the salt before it completely dissolves in water, he will know for certain that it is there in the water; he will not need convincing. On the other hand, a person who only drinks this salty water, but has not seen the salt actually getting dissolved in it, would have doubts. It is then that he has to rely on the teaching of those who know the fact. Similarly, the Atma can only be experienced personally, or by diligently following the teaching of the scriptures. But the basic requirement is a mind attuned to receive such knowledge, and this is possible only when it is free from the taint of corruption and delusions that act like veils covering it.

Yagyavalkya tries to explain to his wife the essential and mystical nature of Brahm. It is a combination of the most incredulous of opposites. And there is no wonder in this paradox—because if Brahm has created everything, if he has injected himself subtly in all his creation as its Atma in order to remain the Lord and master of his own creation by enabling himself to control it from within, if he is the all-pervading and

omnipresent Authority, then he has to be present in the good as well as the bad forms of creation, in the invisible as well as the visible forms of creation, in the cold as well as the hot, or the habitable as well as the inhabitable forms of creation. Brahmin 2 of this canto is sufficient to remove all doubts that might arise in the mind about Brahm.

The significant point to note here is that if doubts can arise in the mind of the wife of such an exalted sage as Yagyavalkya even after living with him all her life and even after being taught by the sage himself, then it is no surprise and wonder that ordinary people are so deluded and ignorant. So, the sage advises her to believe in what he says because he knows what he is saying.]

14. When due to ignorance there is a sense of duality, called the Dwaitya philosophy, one entity smells another entity, one sees another, one hears another, one speaks to another, one remembers another, and one knows the other. But, on the other hand, when everything is viewed in its essential and fundamental form as the Atma, an approach called 'non-duality' belonging to the Advaitya philosophy, then who smells whom, who sees whom, who hears whom, who addresses whom, and who remembers or knows whom¹!

'That' by which all others are known or understood, by which medium can 'that' be understood or known²? Therefore, oh Maitreyi, how can a 'Vigyata' (the omniscient, all-knowing Being; one who knows everything; the perfect yardstick of knowledge by which other things are judged and ascertained) be understood or known by any other lesser entity³? (14).

[Note—¹This concept of non-duality is a constant refrain in the Upanishads. The ideas expressed here have already been stressed by Yagyavalkya earlier in verse no. 6.

²To illustrate this point, let's take an example of the wind/air element which is called the Pran and which is the nearest analogue of Brahm and one of its manifestations because it symbolises life and vitality. This air or Pran has a set of characteristics, but do these define Brahm in its entirety? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. Meanwhile, if we know the characteristics of Brahm, we become aware of all the characteristics which are specifically possessed by the wind/air element and exhibited by Pran simply because the latter is one of the manifestations of the former. Since the wind/air element is present throughout the world in more or less equal intensity and quantity, we would conclude that we are aware of a certain set of characteristics in the whole world which define Brahm, such as for example the ability of air to inject and sustain 'life' in the creature in the form of the Pran living inside it, and make the body move from place to place. But this limited knowledge and view of the powers of the wind/air element will not give the complete picture of Brahm, because the latter has other exemplary virtues not possessed by the wind/air element.

So we can make ourselves aware of the qualities of wind/air element by analyzing the characteristics and virtues of Brahm, but how can we know the latter with the exclusive yardstick of the former.

³The touchstone is used to judge the purity of gold; it is the test of the gold's purity. But how can gold be used as a criterion to judge the purity of the touchstone? That is, something that is complete in itself can

be used as a criterion for judging or measuring others, but it is imprudent to do the other way round.

In this verse emphasis is laid on the ‘non-dual’ nature of Brahm. With this enlightened view point, everything that exists—visible or invisible, tangible or intangible, perceptible or imperceptible, comprehensible or incomprehensible—are all reduced to one, single, immutable and irrefutable ‘truth’ or essence, and that is Brahm. And this macrocosmic Brahm is synonymous with the microcosmic Atma which actually resides as pure consciousness in the individual forms that the creatures of this creation take. These creatures are the units that combine together as a mosaic to form the composite mass known as creation.

By knowing the characteristic virtues of Atma, we come to know about all things which are manifestations of that single supreme entity which the Atma represents. That is, ‘by knowing the Atma, everything is known—both Brahm as well as Brahm’s revelation in the form of this world’.]

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Canto 2 Brahmin 5

[This section deals with the so-called ‘Madhu Vidya’ which is one of the meditative practices prescribed in Vedanta to concentrate the mind upon the ultimate truth which is treated as Madhu or honey. Honey is the refined extract collected by the honey bee from different flowers. This honey has the unique characteristic quality of providing energy to all the creatures. It has life sustaining virtues, is sweet and succulent, and is deemed to be like the Ambrosia in creation. It is also a term used for endearment; for something which is very dear to a person and close to his heart. In this Brahmin, it is employed as symbolising the life sustaining virtues of all the individual manifestations of Nature, such as the earth, water, fire, wind, sky and its directions, the sun, the moon, the electric and the clouds which make each one of them dear to all the living creatures. In the same vein, Dharma (righteous living), Truth, humans amongst all the living beings, the Atma or pure consciousness which is the soul and the spirit of all that exists—all of them are also regarded as ‘honey’ produced by the supreme creator for the benefit of his subjects. The creature on the other hand gives these units their intrinsic value and importance, and therefore it is the honey of the latter. It is a symbiotic relationship.

This Brahmin emphasises the point that the only truthful reality in existence that is worth adoring, honouring, worshipping and paying attention to is known as Brahm manifested in various forms having different qualities. Together these act like pieces of mosaic to complete the whole picture of the wonderful creation, with each piece representing one facet of the magnificent and grand quality of Brahm.

This knowledge contained in this Brahmin is called *Madhu Vidya* because it deals with the mystical knowledge pertaining to the Atma and Brahm as being equivalent to honey, because it is the distilled ‘truth’ that is extracted by deep contemplation and meditation upon each unit of this creation to unravel its hidden secrets. This is sort saying that we are trying

to understand the absolute Truth through a conditioned Truth. It is easier for us to understand the glorious potentials and virtues of things that we can actually see in this world, e.g. the earth, the water, the fire, the sun, the moon etc. and then try to peer deep into the factor that is common to them all and lends them their importance and glory, the factor which is a common denominator to all of them. Then it becomes easier to visualise that factor even after removing the different mediums we had used to realise its existence and importance. For example, if someone wants to drink water, he must hold a tumbler full of water because water cannot be held for drinking without a container. But it is the water that is needed by the thirst man, and not the tumbler which is merely a vessel to hold the water.

The same analogy is applied to the knowledge of Brahm and Atma when the term 'honey' is used for them in relation to the different elements of creation. These elements are merely vessels that contain the honey representing the Absolute Essence of this creation, absolute Truth known as the Atma or soul of that individual unit of creation at the micro level of creation, and as Brahm of the entire creation at the macro level.

This is the basic idea of this Brahmin 5.

Verse nos. 1-4 describe the glory of the supreme Brahm using the metaphor of honey vis-à-vis the subtle elements of creation such as the earth, water, fire and earth; verse nos. 5-10 deal with the same concept but now they use the analogy of the visible and grosser manifestations of Brahm such as the sun, the moon, the directions, the electric, the clouds and the sky. Finally, verse nos. 11-14 describes the same Brahm in its sublime revelations as the divine qualities of Dharma (righteousness and auspiciousness), Satya (truthfulness), the humans (the most evolved amongst the creation), and the Atma (the pure consciousness). Verse nos. 15 concludes this discussion with the assertion that the Atma is indeed the 'king' of all that exists. Verse nos. 16-18 briefly traces the lineage of sages who were great exponent of this philosophy called Madhu Vidya. Verse no. 18 describes who is the exalted Purush referred constantly in this Brahmin, and the last verse, i.e. no. 19, compares the body to a chariot and affirms that the Supreme Being is only one, but all these entities mentioned in this Brahmin are examples to show its vastness and its ability to reveal itself in everything that exists.

Similar philosophy has been expressed in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition in its Canto 3 published separately in the volume dealing with the Upanishads of this Veda in this series. A separate appendix no. 2 of this volume also highlights this 'Madhu Vidya'.]

1. This earth is like the honey or essence of all living creatures, while all of them are like the honey for this earth¹. The self-illuminated, radiant and splendorous immortal Supreme Being called the Purush residing in this earth (who lends the earth its majestic and unique qualities and potentials) is also the one who resides in the bosom of all the creatures as their pure conscious Atma. It is like Amrit (ambrosia of eternity and bliss; the nectar and honey of life); it is known as Brahm; and it is everything that is² (1).

[Note--¹*Honey* is a metaphor used to indicate something which is life sustaining, a provider of vitality and energy, gives support and succour, is succulent, nectar like, essence, the best and sweet; it is a term indicating fondness and endearment. Honey is something that is liked by all. It is the refined or distilled variety of nectar collected by the honey bees from different flowers instead of from a single flower, and then stored in the honeycomb. In essence therefore honey stands for that thing which is the best of all that is available.

The *earth* in this example is like the honeycomb full of *honey*, while it's essential life sustaining virtues in the form of innumerable material wealth that it produces are symbolic of the honey present in this honeycomb. The earth is the foundation upon which the entire creation is based; no living creature can imagine to survive in vacant space. The living creatures derive all their nourishment and get all the necessities of life from this earth and they do not have to look anywhere else for them in the cosmos. All the essential and necessary ingredients needed to conceive, develop, sustain, encourage and enhance life in all its vibrant colours and myriad manifestations are available in earth; it is a treasure trove that is all sufficient and self sustaining. That is why it is likened to 'honey' because it is a huge collection of the best elements available in creation that are needed to sustain vibrant life and relevant to all life forms.

Similarly, the living *creature* is like honey vis-à-vis the earth because the creature embodies all the best of virtues and qualities present in the earth element in their best and most developed personified form. The structure of the gross body of the living creature, both the immobile ones such as the plants, making up their gross parts such as bark, leaves, fruits, flowers, stems, roots etc., and the mobile ones such as the animals, making up their skin, bones etc., is made of this earth element. Aside of it, this body incorporates the vital qualities of all other elements of creation as listed in this Brahmin from verse no. 1 to verse no. 15. Therefore, symbolically this creature not only represents the best of virtues of the earth element but incorporates all the best of all the elements, making it akin to honey which is the refined or distilled form of nectar collected from different flowers by the honeybee.

Further, the creature is like honey for the earth also because they are loved by the earth as much as a mother loves her child. The earth does not distinguish between a bad man and a good man while providing its benevolent largesse to them; it fosters life in water, in desert and in swamp, in the verdant forest and the mountain, in the ice covered land of the arctic as well as the fertile meadow of the plains with equal magnanimity and benevolence, with equal aplomb and graciousness. All life forms are dear to it. The earth is being exploited endlessly but it never complains and curses. That is why the epithet 'mother' (Mother Earth) is applied to it.

It's a *symbiotic relationship* between the two—the earth and the creature. The earth needs the creature to give it its importance because if there was no life on earth and it was a barren stretch of formidable land mass like the other uninhabitable planets in the solar system, it would have lost its value, relevance and significance. On the other hand, the creature needs the earth for its very existence and survival.

²The earth is a huge collection of all the fundamental elements that came into existence in creation. All life forms have had their origin in one principal entity called *Brahm* which is the cause of all that came into being. It is the cause and end of all. It has been said in the Upanishads

that this supreme transcendental Authority created everything from its own self, and once the decision to do so was taken by it, it simply transformed or metamorphosed into each and every element in creation that would combine together and ultimately be known as the cosmos or universe or world. In other words, this creation is but a manifestation or a revelation of that one single primary entity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm. This Brahm became the *Atma* that lived in each unit of creation as its consciousness and as its unique identity, and the earth element was one such unit. Each of these units had some qualities that were unique to them and were part of that eternal Being from whom it came into being. That is, the outwardly inane and lifeless-looking gross earth element had a latent spark of life and the vitality needed to inject life into other elements that were kept in its womb until their time came to become active. This implies that there is something, some supernatural and divine power that is imperceptibly present in earth as its integral part that lends the earth its stupendous virtues and magnificent glories, its potentials and powers of sustaining and harbouring life. This supreme, enigmatic, divine and holy entity that is inherently present in the earth element lending it its importance and significance is its active ingredient and it is known as Purush because anyone who lives in a body is known as *Purush*. Who is that Purush? Well, he is the embodiment of 'life consciousness' representing the supreme authority in creation who is the Lord Master of all, the ultimate creator and the cause as well as the end and conclusion of all that exists, and he is known by the name of Brahm.

Since nothing exists beyond the boundaries of this cosmos, and since the Brahm is an embodiment of the entire cosmos, or this entire universe is a manifestation of one Brahm, it follows that nothing is beyond Brahm.

This basic idea of honey as it is applied to the earth is also applicable to the other units of creation as described in the following verse nos. 2-15.]

2. [The analogy of the earth used in verse no. 1 is now extended to the water element called 'Apaha'.] The water element is like the honey for all the creatures, and all of them are comparable to honey as far as the water element is concerned¹. The vitality, the life-sustaining and nectar like virtues present inherently in the water is a personified form of the divine Purush (i.e. the supreme Being) who has created life and is synonymous with it at all levels, and who is immortal, eternal, radiant and self-illuminated. This majestic Being is also present in the bosom of the individual creature as its eternal, immortal, radiant and self-illuminated pure conscious Atma. It is the essence and ambrosia of life called Amrit; it is Brahm personified; it is all there is to it² (2).

[Note—¹It is a well established fact that *water* is the most essential requirement for life. This fact is highlighted by the fact that *honey* is a viscous liquid indicating that it symbolises water. No life is sustainable without water in some form or the other. The earth harbours life because it has an abundant supply of this basic element, for there are many planets in the solar system but they lack this water element, and therefore life is impossible in them.

Water displays all the vital signs indicative of something that has life—it moves or flows, it has warmth as evident from the vibrant aquatic ecosystem having its own life consisting of both flora and fauna, it gives as much support as earth to act as a foundation for living entities as is

evident from the fact that like the terrestrial plants giving off roots firmly establishing them on the earth, the aquatic plants also sprout roots as is seen in innumerable varieties such as for example lotus and weeds found floating on the surface of ponds. Water also exists everywhere where there is life, making it synonymous with it.

Water is like honey because, besides being in a fluid state, it is also the essential ingredient of life, a harbinger of life much like honey which is the essence and rectified form of nectar providing energy in concentrated form. The nectar from flowers would have been of no use to the ordinary creature had it not been converted to honey for its consumption. Similarly, had there been no water in creation life would have been scorched by the fire burning eternally in the bowls of the earth.

Honey is valued not as the gross viscous fluid produced as an excreta by the honey bee as a by product of digesting nectar that is of any importance to the creature, but for its inherent qualities and intrinsic virtues of providing energy and vitality, its quality of exemplary sweetness and succulence that makes honey so valuable, useful and praise worthy for the creature. The inherent virtues of honey—viz. its quality of being sweet, succulent, life sustaining and energy providing—makes it so endearing to the creature. These qualities of honey are symbolically the ‘Atma’, or the essence of honey; they make the honey worth for what it is.

The same logic also applies to water, because the water of a drain and ocean as well as of the drinking well and the river are all the same, but it is the sweet and nourishing water of the well or the spring or the clean running water of a river that is sought after by a man, and not the water of the drain. Therefore, it is the sweetness, succulence, life sustenance and the nourishing virtues inherently present in the unpolluted and clean water element that is of greater importance and value for the creature than the mere physical body of that water. In other words, ‘water’, in its basic and pure form, is not a lifeless entity and therefore that essential force, that fundamental factor that lends the characteristic life sustaining qualities to water, which helps it to be identified as a symbol of life, is the same factor that infuses life in all the other vital elements of creation, including the ‘living’ creature that exemplifies that supreme power in creation. And that ‘supreme power and authority’ is known as *Brahm* at the cosmic level, and the *Atma* at the individual unit level of the creation. Since that supreme *Brahm* has personified himself as the basic life sustaining glorious qualities of water and lives inside it as its integral part, it is called a *Purush* because the word indicates one who lives in a body. It is also called the *Atma* because it is the basic spirit and soul of everything that has life, like the water in this instance. It is that *Brahm* living inside the water as the *Purush* that lends water its stupendous qualities and glorious virtues.

Now, the creature is like honey for the water because the creature embodies all the best of virtues and qualities present in the water element in their best and most developed and evolved pristine form. The structure of the gross body of the living creature consisting, inter alia, of blood, mucous, urine, digestive juices, hormones etc., and all of them are made of this water element. They display all the basic virtues and characteristics of the water element. Aside of it, this body incorporates the vital qualities of all other elements of creation as listed in this *Brahmin* from verse no. 1 to verse no. 15. Therefore, symbolically this creature not only represents the best of virtues of the water element but

incorporates all the best of all the other elements, making it akin to honey which is the refined or distilled form of nectar collected from different flowers by the honeybee.

Further, the water is of any relevance only as long as there is the living creature to enjoy and appreciate its qualities and nectar like virtues. Say for example, water cascading violently down steep waterfalls creates only fear and awe in the mind of a man; the violent ocean during storms can snuff the life out of the crew of a capsized ship; a river in spate causes immense destruction and havoc. In all these examples, a man who has ever experienced the life terminating abilities of water would get goose bumps whenever he thinks of the water element. So, only when the water shows its magnanimous and benevolent qualities of sustaining life of the creature that the latter appreciates the former. The creature gives water its due importance and respect by accepting it as the ambrosia of life and fertility. The man offers water to the spirit of his dead ancestors to satisfy them; he does not offer them gold or silver. Even the sanctified drinks prepared and offered to the Gods during sacrifices are in liquid form. During fasts that the man keeps as part of religious duties, he is allowed to drink water because it is deemed to be holy and sanctified. This is in itself enough to establish its importance in the eyes of a man. Aquatic life and the creatures that depend upon water can never say enough thanks to water because their very existence depends upon it. In other words, water is akin to the honey as far as the creature is concerned, for the simple reason that life depends upon it.

So we see that water and the living creature have a working *symbiotic relationship*.

²*Brahm* which lends the water its essential vitality, its values, its importance and its life giving virtues also resides inside the bosom of the living creature as its *Atma* or pure consciousness lending the creature its own life. In other words, the basic entity that infuses the element of 'life and consciousness' in both is the same authority known as the supreme transcendental *Brahm*. 'Life' is a symbol or personification of *Brahm* in its pure conscious truthful form.

Similarly, the *Atma* of a creature is of more importance than the body of the creature, and when the example of the honey is applied to it, this *Atma* becomes synonymous with it. This *Atma* is *Brahm* personified, and since this 'Atma lives inside the body' of the creature as its consciousness, it is called the '*Purush* signifying 'one that lives in a body'.

See note to verse no. 1 in this context. Refer also to Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no.8 in this context.]

3. The fire element is like the honey of all the living creatures, and the latter are akin to the honey as far as the fire element is concerned¹. The intrinsic glorious virtues possessed by the fire element, such as its stupendous and magnificent energy, its radiance and splendour, its ability to provide heat and light, its potentials and authority to accept everything, purify it or burn it to ashes, are some of the characteristic virtues that are the inherent qualities present in the fire element. The magnificent qualities that the fire element possesses are the personification of some of the glorious virtues of the immortal and eternal Supreme Being with his stupendous potentials. Since this Being lives in the fire element as its integral part, lending the fire its magnificence and glory, it is called a *Purush* (i.e. one who lives in a body). This same *Purush* resides in the

individual creature as its pure consciousness called the Atma or soul which is immortal and eternal as well as self-illuminated and enlightened. It is indeed Brahm personified; it is indeed eternal and an ambrosia of life; it is indeed all there is to it² (3).

[Note—¹The *fire* element is the most potential and powerful entity in creation. Its stupendous powers, its splendour, its radiance, its dazzle and brilliance, its ferocity and potentials are exemplary and legendary. It is an essential necessity for life because it provides warmth, heat, light and energy. All these are vital parameters needed for life to be sustained as is evident from the fact that in frigid condition no life exists. It helps the creature to cook food and digest it so as to derive nourishment and energy from it. Had there been no fire, there would have been no food growing on earth in the first place. Therefore, it is like *honey* for the creature because it sustains life.

Similarly, the *creature* is like honey for the fire element because the creature embodies all the best of virtues and qualities present in the fire element in their best and most developed and evolved pristine form. The living creature, both the immobile ones such as the plants and the mobile ones such as the animals, displays such intrinsic qualities inherent to this fire element as warmth, energy, vigour, vitality, relentlessness and potentials to acquire or destroy anything which it can grasp much like the fire element. Aside of this fire element, this body of the creature incorporates the vital qualities of all other elements of creation as listed in this Brahmin from verse no. 1 to verse no. 15. Therefore, symbolically this creature not only represents the best of virtues of the fire element but incorporates all the best of all the other elements, making it akin to honey which is the refined or distilled form of nectar collected from different flowers by the honeybee.

Likewise, the good benefits of the fire are enjoyed by the creature and it derives/extracts energy and vitality from it even as the beneficial nectar of the flowers is enjoyed by the honeybee and the honey is the end product of digestion of this nectar by it. Further, the fire gets its importance and value because it is needed by the creature for its own sustenance, as the fire provides the much needed energy, light, heat and vitality to the creature. It is needed to cook and digest food, to keep the body warm and to generally foster life. Had the fire not shown these benevolent characters and only shown its vicious nature of burning everything, it would not have been worshipped and honoured as it is being done now. In fact, it is so dear to a man as representative of all living beings that it is the only element out of the five (the others being earth, water, air and sky) that is offered worship as a God by him by offering oblations during a holy fire sacrifice. It is well known that there are special shrines dedicated to the Fire God and almost in all temples a fire is kept eternally burning as a mark of the presence of life and purifying divinity within the premises. No other element is shown such great regard.

Therefore there exists a sort of *symbiotic relationship* between the fire and the creature.

²The *spark of life* present in all living creatures as their Atma is also the 'fire' because any 'spark' is a symbol of fire. This fire is also the 'spark of life' as it is the source of the symbolic light that dispels darkness representing ignorance and delusions. Since an enlightened life and pure consciousness are synonymous, *Brahm* and *Atma* are also synonymous; the former has revealed himself as the latter in the body of

the creature. Therefore, Atma is called the *Purush* because it dwells in the body of the creature as its enlightened pure consciousness. Since vitality, warmth, light and energy are also synonymous with life, it follows that 'fire' is also synonymous with life. It is the *honey* of life; it is the essential factor and symbol of life; it is the essence of life. It is the Atma of all living beings as it represents the 'conscious and lively' factor in a body—a fact proved when we observe a dead body which has no energy and vitality in it, i.e. from which 'fire' has been extinguished. Refer also to Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no.7 in this context.]

4. The wind or air element is like the honey for all living creatures, while the latter are like the honey for the former¹. The vitality and strength, the potentials and powers that are so characteristic and inherent in the wind/air element are manifestation or revelation of the stupendous and divine virtues and glory of the supreme transcendental Authority that has empowered the wind/air elements with them. In other words, that Authority lives as the basic quality displayed by this element. It is called a *Purush* that resides in the wind/air element as its identity. Similarly, this same supreme Authority resides in the individual creature as its life-giving pure conscious factor known as the Atma or soul². It is immortal, it is eternal, it is like the ambrosia called Amrit, and it is Brahm. Indeed, it is all there is to it (4).

[Note—¹The *wind or air* element is superior to the earth, water and the fire elements as it possesses such qualities as being more subtle, more invisible, more all-pervading, more omnipresent and having more power and punch as compared to these three. It comes only after the sky element of creation in its subtlety. It is like *honey* for the entire creation for such symbolic reasons, inter alia, as being located in the sky much like the honey being located in the honeycomb dangling from the branch of a tree high above the reach of the creature standing on the earth; it is the sweetest and most desirable thing in creation because life cannot survive without it even for a second as is evident when we suffocate to death in the absence of air although we can live without water and food for quite some time; it fills all the available space of creation much like honey which fills the entire space of the honeycomb.

The wind/air element helps the body of the creature to perform all its designated functions in the form of its various Prans or vital winds located in the different parts of the body. Briefly, these vital winds are called the 'Panch Prans' or the five so-called life-sustaining winds in the body. They are—Pran, Apaana, Vyana, Samana and Udana.

It helps the fire to remain kindled, the water to remain clean by making it move and provide rain in the form of the clouds which cannot form without the aid of the wind/air element, it keeps the earth aerated and swept clean by its gusts.

Similarly, the *creature* is like honey for the wind/air element because the creature embodies all the best of virtues and qualities present in it in their best and most developed and evolved pristine form. The living creature utilises the grand and glorious virtues of this element and develops into a full blooming creation. For example, the birds fly like the wind; the man and the animal, and the cloud also move about swiftly like the wind. In fact, the living creature is the best exhibit of the potentials of the wind/air element.

Therefore, this creation consisting of living beings represents the fruit of all the efforts made by this wind/air element to sustain life with

all its vibrancy and colour. So the individual unit of this creation, i.e. the creature, is like the essential virtues, potentials, qualities and majestic powers of the wind/air element on display. In other words, the individual creature is like a manifestation of the great virtues of the wind/air element much like the honey which is the best distilled form of nectar extracted from the flowers and stored for display.

Aside of this wind/air element, this body of the creature incorporates the vital qualities of all other elements of creation as listed in this Brahmin from verse no. 1 to verse no. 15. Therefore, symbolically this creature not only represents the best of virtues of the wind/air element but incorporates all the best of all the elements, making it akin to honey which is the refined or distilled form of nectar collected from different flowers by the honeybee.

No life is sustainable on earth without air, and therefore the air is the essence of life much like the honey which is the essence of nectar. The wind or air will have no significance or worth if it could not inject life in a creature by becoming its breath; the living creature gives air its worth and importance by showing its stupendous potentials in practical terms. The same wind/air which is a harbinger of life can be a source of nuisance in the form of storms, typhoons and tornadoes which cause ruin and destruction in their wake. The same wind/air element which causes so much havoc can sustain life when present in the body of a creature in the form of the vital winds called the Panch Prans, the reason why it is so much sought after and dear to all living beings much like the honey extracted from flowers.

Hence, for the living creature, the wind/air element is like the honey because it cannot survive without it, while for the wind/air element, the creature is like the honey because it lends this element its worth and importance by seeking it in the form of the life sustaining wind/air without which no life can survive.

Therefore, the creature and the wind/air have a *symbiotic relationship*.

²The vitality and potentials exhibited by the wind/air element is provided to it by some supreme Authority that has delegated some of its stupendous powers to this element in order to smoothly run the chariot of creation. In order to ensure that the chariot did not run wild, this Authority boarded it and sat inside it as its controlling charioteer. So, this analogy sums up how the supreme *Brahm* resides in the wind/air element as its all powerful *Purush*, i.e. as its vitality, strength, glories and potentials personified.

Now, when this wind or air assumes the role of life sustenance in the individual unit of creation represented by the creature, it is called the *Pran* present inside the body of the creature. Therefore, the supreme Authority now present in the body of the creature in order to control this Pran is called its pure conscious *Atma* or soul in whose service this Pran works.

Since the wind/air element exhibits some of the vital characteristics of that Supreme Being from which it has originated, and since nothing exists in this creation that is not *Brahm*, it follows that this wind/air element is 'one' of the personifications of that supreme and transcendental *Brahm*. It is indeed as eternal and infinite as its principal; it is as immortal and imperishable as its principal; it is the irrevocable and immutable Truth personified. Refer also to Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no.6 in this context.]

5. This Aditya (the Sun) is like the honey for all the living creatures, while the latter are like honey for Aditya¹. The infinitely glorious, splendid and radiant energy, the vitality and essence of life in the form of heat, energy and light inherently present in the Sun, is a personification of that supreme transcendental Being who is immortal and eternal, glorious and self-illuminated, and an embodiment of the ambrosia of life called Amrit. That Being resides in the Sun as the divine Purush (so-called because of the fact that anyone who resides in a body is called a Purush) giving the Sun its fundamental identity and unique characteristics. The same Supreme Being resides in the individual creature as the 'eye' of its Atma or soul². Verily, it is eternal and imperishable; it is the ambrosia of life; it is all that there is to it (5).

Note—¹The *Sun* is the most visible and obvious form of the magnificent and stupendous glories of the supreme creator of this creation. The Sun is like *honey* because it symbolises the grand virtues of honey in many ways—it is glowing with radiance, it is full of energy and vitality, it is invigorating and life infusing as is evident from the fact that if there was no Sun there would be no life on earth. Even as the honey represents the best of essence extracted from the flowers, the heavenly Sun displays all the magnificent virtues and glories of creation dangling from the sky much like the honeycomb hanging from the branch of the tree. The Sun symbolises honey in its most potent form. Meditation upon the Sun as a source of life and vitality symbolised by honey has also been elaborately discussed in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3 of Sam Veda tradition, published separately as chapter no. 2 of the anthology of Sam Veda Upanishads published in this series.

The *creature* is like honey for the Sun because it embodies all the best of virtues and qualities present in the Sun in their best and most developed and evolved pristine form. The living creature utilises the grand and glorious virtues of the Sun for its own use and then develops into a full blooming creation. For example, the creature has the energy, the warmth, the stamina, the vitality and potentials displayed by the Sun. The creature also has the majestic ability to replicate the light, heat and energy shown by the celestial Sun by making diligent efforts as is evident in modern times when the nuclear energy created by man has no less potential than the mighty Sun; large cities are lighted even during dark nights; the heat of the blast furnace is sufficient to melt iron; artificial means are adopted to enhance plant growth much like the Sun to promote growth by photosynthesis; electricity is generated by solar voltaic cells.

There is another connotation to this concept. When people do fire sacrifice, selected herbs and other forms of offerings are offered to the Gods through the means of burning them in the holy fire. The flame and smoke of the fire pit move up in the direction of the heavens symbolising that the offerings are moving towards the Gods. The energy and vitality that these offerings symbolically give to the Gods are stored by them in the Sun. In other words, even as the honey is the refined product of nectar collected from a wide variety of flowers, the energy and vitality that reaches the Gods by means of offerings to the sacred fire are also equally reformed forms of the best of things available in Nature because one only offers to the Gods what is the best, and therefore its treasury, the Sun, also contains the best form of energy and vitality available. Hence, symbolically the Sun is like the pitcher of honey as far as the Gods and creatures over which they rule are concerned.

In the example of the fire sacrifice cited above, the creature is regarded as honey for the Sun because the Sun depends upon the creatures on this earth to offer sacred things to the fire sacrifice that would be lifted up and stored in the Sun; had there been no life on this earth and thereby no creatures to make offerings, the sun would have lost its glory, splendour and radiance, its endless supply of energy, light and heat which it has derived from the offerings made during fire sacrifices by the creatures.

So, in short, the individual creature of this creation showcases the best of the Sun and it therefore like the extract of the best of the virtues that the Sun stands for.

This creation consisting of living beings represents the fruit of all the efforts made by this Sun to sustain life with all its vibrancy and colour. So the individual unit of this creation, i.e. the creature, is like the essential virtues, potentials, qualities and majestic powers of the Sun on display. In other words, the individual creature is like a manifestation of the great divine virtues of the Sun much like the honey which is the best of nectar extracted from the flowers and stored for display.

A sort of *symbiotic relationship* exists between the creature on the earth and the Sun in the sky whereby the former offers worship and respect to the Sun by praying and offering oblations to it, morning, afternoon and evening, daily as a token of its appreciation and thanksgiving to the Sun for its great benevolence and magnanimity in supporting life on this earth, while the Sun obliges the creature by showering its largesse in the form of daylight, heat, warmth and energy so that the wheel of life goes on unhindered.

²The Atma is consciousness and enlightenment personified. Just like the sun lights the dark world with its light, the Atma's conscious form and inherent wisdom acts like the spiritual *eye* of the creature. In other words, a person who realises the greatness of his Atma and its pure conscious pristine nature gets to see the 'truth' even in the darkness induced by ignorance and delusions. Once spiritual wisdom and enlightenment dawns upon him, he becomes aware of the essential truths of this existence much like the man who begins to see as soon as the sun rises in the horizon after the darkness of the night.

In the *genesis of creation*, the Sun God has taken up his dwelling in the eye of the creature. It is through the eye that the creature's world is lighted for it much as the Sun lighting the greater realm of the world by its rays. Metaphysically, the eye referred to here is the 'eye of wisdom', which implies spiritual wisdom and spiritual awakening. This eye is the 'third eye' or the 'eye of insight' as compared to the physical eye present in the gross body. This eye of wisdom and enlightenment lights up the dark interiors of the creature and removes his darkness of ignorance and delusions. The presence of the Sun in the eye is therefore a metaphor for the presence of the qualities of wisdom, erudition and the ability to ponder deeply and analyse things to arrive at the Truth that is inherently present in all the creatures. This Truth is the pure conscious entity known as the Atma which is like the honey, the essence, for the creature.

'Light' is synonymous with knowledge and enlightenment, while darkness with ignorance and delusions. Since the *Sun and the 'eye'* are both like the lanterns that provide constant light for the benefit of the creature, they are both like *honey* for the creature. The strength, the power, the ability, the energy, the vitality and the conscious life present in both these units of creation that empowers them with their characteristic ability of being able to provide 'light' to this creation—by

the Sun at the cosmic level and by the eye at the individual level of the creature—are symbolic of the stupendous potentials of Brahm. Indeed, they are personifications or revelations of Brahm with all its glories and magnificence.

The rest of the meaning of terms used in this verse is almost identical with the previous verses. Refer also to Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no.2 in this context.]

6. The various directions are equivalent to honey for the creatures, whereas the creatures are like the honey for the directions¹. The supreme, transcendental Being present imperceptibly in all the directions as the resident Purush symbolising all the characteristic qualities and virtues depicted by these directions which render them with their importance and significance, is the same divine, eternal, infinite and sublime Purush that is present in the organ of the ear in the body of the creature (as its faculty of hearing). This Purush, symbolising Brahm, who is subtly and imperceptibly present at the macrocosmic level as the Viraat Purush who pervades in all the directions, and as the Atma of the individual creature as its pure consciousness at the microcosmic level, is eternal and infinite, is radiant and self-illuminated, and is like the ambrosia called Amrit. Verily, this is the truth, this is Brahm, and this is all there is to it² (6).

[Note—¹(a) The term *direction* has a broad sweep— it includes all the points in the celestial compass. The farthest point of any direction becomes 'endless' because as one moves towards that point in the horizon, that point moves ahead of him. As a creature moves from one point to another, the direction also moves ahead with it. The patron God or Purush of the direction is represented by the subtle element called sound which basically consists of the 'energy' of vibration produced in the air element as far as the atmosphere of the earth is concerned, and in the ether in the deep recesses of the vast cosmos. Energy is symbolic of 'life'; it is like the *honey* of existence. The faculty of hearing is located in the *ears* which is the instrument of the body by which a man identifies a particular sound emanating from a given direction. If he had no ear, the direction would have no relevance for him because he would not hear anything.

The sound emanating from the directions not only makes a man contented and satisfied that he has the glorious potentials to be able to hear something, or that he possesses that glorious ability of 'hearing' by which he is not handicapped, and this awareness makes the man feel exhilarated and blessed that he is not handicapped by deafness. It also makes him aware of so many things happening elsewhere in various directions about which he can know or learn only by means of hearing because it is never possible to be personally present everywhere to witness each and every event.

The faculty of hearing gives him immense pleasure, as when he hears music; he says the sound of music coming from such and such direction is so soothing and exhilarating for him. When one hears the sound of music coming from a particular direction, his ears turn toward that direction.

The sound emanating from the various directions gives him a sense of bearing as is evident when a man moves in a particular direction in the dark of night relying upon a sound that he hears from there. The ears can guide a man in the wilderness towards his destination based on the

sounds that he can relate with certain known directions which give him his sense of bearing, for these act as pegs or symbolic milestones to guide him towards his destination. For instance, when he hears the sound coming from the hustle and bustle of a city, then even though he were blindfolded he would still point towards the rough direction of the city from where this sound is coming, and he can lead others in that direction. Similarly, when we hear the sound of bell chiming in a church or a temple, we may conclude that the church or the temple is located in that particular direction, and it is the time of service in it.

These examples would prove the link between the ears, the direction and the importance of sound. Medically, problems with the semi-circular canal in the ear cause a sensation of disorientation and vertigo in a man when he loses his sense of bearing. Then he is like a man hallucinating for he has lost his bearings.

Therefore, the *directions are like the honey for the ear* because they help him to find his bearing; the directions have relevance only till the time a man is able to hear through his ears, because otherwise he would not have any perception of sound and would therefore lose any interest in the existence of any direction. The *ear is like the honey for the directions* as the former gives the later its importance and significance because it is due to the ear that the sound emanating from the different directions are picked up by the man and the latter is able to recognise the existence of those directions and relate to them. They both lend importance to each other; they complement each other. They have a sort of symbiotic relationship with each other.

(b) There is another connotation. A man's good deeds and actions become known to others when the information about them spread far and wide in all the *directions*. These directions become subtly pregnant with their good name and fame. But others become aware of these noble and virtues deeds and actions only when they hear about them through their *ears*. These good and auspicious deeds and actions are like nectar because they form a repository of references which can be used by others who would in turn extract their essence, or honey, to guide them in their own lives. The knowledge that is virtuous, auspicious and noble impregnates all the directions as an eternal repository of reference that can be used by all to suit their own circumstances and times; they inspire others who would then try to implement them in their own lives, thereby improving themselves and help others to improve themselves. The chain continues.

This is like the bees collecting nectar from different flowers and producing honey for the use of others. Even as honey is stored in the honeycomb, these good virtues are symbolically stored as information and knowledge in the various directions to be used by others as and when they are needed. To use this information, the creature needs ears because only by hearing about them would it come to learn about them. Therefore, the *directions are like the honey for the ear* because they help to store information and the good news originating at different places, while the *ear is like the honey for the directions* because this information and knowledge is useful only when the creature can hear of them.

Thus, the directions and the ear have a *symbiotic relationship* with each other.

²This vital function of hearing located in the ear and the presence of sound in all the directions which activates this faculty are like *Brahm* because it is from Brahm that everything has emanated, it is Brahm that activates everything, and it is Brahm that perceives everything in the

form of the different faculties. Since this Brahm has taken up a dwelling in the various directions at the macro level and in the ear at the micro level, it is called *Purush*. (Verse no. 18 defines this word *Purush*.) This Brahm is immanent, all-pervading, omnipresent and immortal just like the various directions and the sound emanating from them as well as the faculty of hearing present in the instrument of the ear of the creature. Though the ear might become dysfunctional in an individual creature due to certain disease, this faculty is imperishable in the sense that it is a universal faculty and any person who hears anything has this faculty in him. One person may be deaf by one ear, but that does not mean that this faculty has perished. If the underlying disease that has caused his deafness is removed, he begins to hear.

Anything having life and energy, anything which gives bliss and happiness, is *Brahm* personified. Sound is the subtlest element which is regarded as the nearest analogue to Brahm as is evident in the fact that the divine word OM is regarded as a synonym of Brahm and this is the reason it is used as a Mantra to meditate upon Brahm. This cosmic word has no fixed place; it pervades throughout the length and breadth of the sky as the cosmic background sound called Naad.

The best example to understand this phenomenon of ‘sound existing and emanating in all the directions’ is when we hear the thunder and rumbling of clouds during a severe storm—the thunder seems to reverberate and echo from all the directions and it is not possible to pinpoint any one direction from where it is heard. Rain, lightening and clouds can be located in a particular area of the sky, but the thunder and rumble are all pervading in the space of the sky.

The inherent capacity of bearing the vital signs of life in the form of ethereal sound which is the manifested form of energy of vibration in the air or ether, and the ability to perceive it make both the direction where this sound resides and the ears where it is perceived as being abodes of the magnificent aspect of Nature called the *Purush* who symbolises those unique characteristics of the supreme transcendental *Brahm* as depicted by the sound element. In other words, the directions and the ears are the respective abodes of the divine qualities of sound and hearing which are manifestations of Brahm.

The directions are pregnant with cosmic sound present as ethereal vibrations which have *energy* in the form of sound energy, and which has an infinite dimension and reach. This sound element, having its abode in all the directions, is heard but it is invisible, yet it is undeniably *true* because it is heard in the present time. It cannot be touched, seen, felt or smelt, but nevertheless it is definitely there; it is an irrefutable truth which cannot be denied, simply because a man has actually heard the sound himself and is a witness to its presence. Therefore, the sound existing in all the directions and heard by a man through his ears is synonymous with *Brahm* because it is truthfully and undeniably there, and it is not a figment of his imagination.

It is *Amrit* (ambrosia, elixir) because, for example, the sound in the form of music is very soothing for ruffled and tormented minds. It is *eternal and infinite* because, one, the energy is an imperishable entity and at the most it changes its form, and two, it is in the form of cosmic vibration in the ether filling the entire vastness of the space. It is *Purush* because it is present in the various directions and makes them pregnant with its presence; since Brahm is the only entity that has this unique quality of being eternally present everywhere at the same time, it follows that this *Purush* is *Brahm*.

Refer, Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 11 in this context.]

7. The Moon is like honey for all the living creatures of the world, and the latter are like honey for the former¹. The brilliance and magnificence of the Moon represents the divine, glorious, bright, luminous and magnificent Supreme Being present in it as the Purush, and this Purush is also present in the Mana (or mind and heart) of the individual creature. It is indeed radiant and self-illuminated; it is eternal, infinite and imperishable; and it is the ambrosia called Amrit. Verily, it is that entity which is called Atma or soul which is pure consciousness, is eternal, infinite and imperishable, is the ambrosia, is Brahm personified. Indeed, it is whatever there is to it² (7).

[Note—¹The *Moon* has been traditionally treated as the pitcher full of ambrosia drunk by the Gods. This ambrosia is like *honey* as it represents the best of all available extracts in creation that has sublime and divine qualities. It is an elixir that provides energy and vitality to the creature and supports life. It also gives the creature bliss and happiness because of its sweet and succulent taste and energy providing qualities. Similarly, the soothing light of the moon also provides bliss and happiness to the creature that is scorched by the heat of the sun during the day. This is why the moon is like ‘honey’ for the creature on this earth.

The oblations that the creature offers to the Moon God are symbolically converted as the bliss-giving ambrosia stored in the moon as its ‘honey’. The honey-like moonlight spreads in all the corners of the realm where the moon shines, so it is all-pervading and omnipresent. It is high above and beyond the reach of ordinary creatures on earth; hence it is like the supreme transcendental Brahm living in the heavens. It is also like the honeycomb dangling from the sky.

The moon is the symbolic *honeycomb* storing honey at the macro level of the creation because it stores the ambrosia of eternal bliss and peace meant for the Gods at the cosmic level, while the Mana (mind and heart) represents it at the micro level of the individual creature. This honey or ambrosia stored in this honeycomb personifies *Brahm* because all the virtues possessed by it are also possessed by Brahm. Since this Brahm resides in the body of the Moon, i.e. since it has assumed a body known as the Moon, he is called a *Purush* (because the word refers to someone who dwells in a body). That is why the Moon exhibits some of the unique characteristics of Brahm at the macro level. At the level of the individual creature, its mind and heart are the dwelling place of this Brahm as its *Atma* or consciousness present in the lotus-like ‘heart’ as well as in its intellect, called its ‘Buddhi’, and its various faculties in the ‘mind’. That is why this Atma is also called Purush because it is the resident Brahm inside the body of the creature as its consciousness marked by intelligence.

The moon derives its importance and value because the man praises it for the divine Amrit that it stores, so much so that it has been deified as a God, besides for its beauty and charm as well as for the soothing and bright moonlight that it provides during the darkness of the night. Otherwise the moon would have been simply another celestial body like so many stars. This is why the man, representing the all the living *creatures* of this earth, is like the ‘honey’ for the moon; the importance, significance and value that the moon has is due to the honour the creature bestows upon it.

Aside from this point, the best of virtues that the moon represents have been used by the creature for its own happiness and peace, its own bliss and tranquility. Even as honey represents the best of extracts derived from flowers, the creature is honey for the moon because it is the former that derives the best of benefits from the moon as compared to the other units of creation.

According to the genesis of creation, the Moon God took up residence in the Mana of the individual creature at the time of creation. It is for this reason that the mind and heart are the ones that can provide real and internal happiness and bliss to a man, and not any external factors. At the most, the external material things of the world can give him bodily comfort, but if his heart and mind is tormented he can never get real peace and bliss. That is also why the Upanishads stress so much on the control of the Mana as the main source of cultivating peace and happiness for the soul.

There is another connotation to this verse. When people do a fire sacrifice, an invigorating liquid is drunk during it and it is also offered to the Gods. It is known as Som. According to mythology, this Som is stored by the Gods in the moon. Hence, moon is like the pitcher of the best of elixirs available in this world. In this example, the creature is regarded as honey for the moon because the moon depends upon the creatures on this earth to offer sacred Som to the fire sacrifice that would be lifted up and stored in the moon; had there been no life on this earth and thereby no creatures to make offerings, the moon would have lost its glory, splendour and radiance, its importance and relevance along with its endless supply of the elixir of life known as Som which it has derived as offerings to the Gods made by the creatures. When anything is done with the whole heart and mind focused on it, it produces the best of results. Religious sacrifices and the Som offered to Gods also need focus and total involvement of the heart and mind in the sense that there must be devotion, sincerity and commitment on the part of the worshipper. Otherwise they become a farce. Therefore, the Mana is like the honey for the creature because it represents its best of faculties, producing the best of results the creature has to offer.

Thus, the Moon and the Mana of the creature have a working *symbiotic relationship* because the Moon God has his symbolic abode in the Mana of the creature, and this Mana derives its basic qualities and characteristics from the Moon God. They both depend upon each other for their glories.

²A man offers his worship to the Moon as a symbolic body of the Supreme Being much like the reason why he offers worship to the Sun as this entity is also the symbolic body of the same Brahm. In fact, these two celestial entities are the most visible indications of the glorious manifest signs of Brahm. As far as the creature is concerned, the Moon is an eternal and imperishable entity, because though it vanishes from sight during the dark night it nevertheless reemerges the next day, and goes on to blossom to its full glory during the full moon night. A man shows so much respect to this form of Brahm known as the Purush that all his religious activities and life revolves around the lunar cycle called the lunar month or lunar calendar.

The Mana has the same potentials as the supreme Brahm—it can be as creative and innovative as Brahm; it has the same sway, say and authority over the individual domain of the creature as Brahm has over the cosmos. Therefore, the Purush residing in the Moon as well as the Mana of the individual creature as their stupendous glories,

magnificent virtues and majestic potentials is none other than the supreme transcendental Brahm himself.

An interesting *comparison* can be made between the Moon and the Atma. Since the Atma or soul, which is pure consciousness and which is regarded as a personification of Brahm, resides in the heart of a living being, and since the Moon God also symbolically has his residence in the heart, both are likened to each other; both are synonyms of each other. The brightly shining moon in the dark sky is like the Atma shining in the dark realm of the body of the creature. Therefore the Atma is like the moon in the sky, forming the soul of the cosmos. Like the Atma, the moon also effuses a bright light; it is also illuminated like the Atma. This Atma is the vital and quintessential element present inside body of a creature, and since the truth can be only one and not two, this Atma is like the Purush representing the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the only Truth in this creation. Again, since the Moon and the Atma are synonymous with each other, the Moon is also like the Purush. Since what is known as the Truth and the essential element of creation is like honey, the Moon as well as the Atma are also like the honey of this creation.

See Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 3 in this context.]

8. The Electric (and its inherent energy, potentials and powers) is like the honey for all living creatures, while the latter are like honey for the former¹. The supreme, powerful, authoritative and radiantly self-illuminated Being, who resides as the almighty authority known as the Purush in the Electric forming the core or centre of its powers and potentials, is the same as the Purush present in the subtle body of the creature as its Tej or its inherent divinity, glory, radiant energy, stupendous potentials and majestic splendour. Verily, it is the Atma, or pure pristine consciousness, which is eternal, imperishable and infinite; it is like ambrosia, and it is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified. This is all there is to it² (8).

[Note—¹The majestic and stupendous energy, power, force, strength and potentials present intrinsically in the *electric* as its basic defining quality are like honey because these inherent qualities present in a subtle manner in any creature drives the creature much like the battery that drives a battery-operated toy, or an electric dynamo drives a machine. The best evidence to prove the observations made in this verse in relation to the creature vis-à-vis the electric is the established fact that the heart and the mind forming the subtle body of the creature generate electric currents that can be measured by sensitive electronic instruments (such as the ECG machine for the heart and the EEG machine for the mind). The heart beats due to electric impulses, and the mind and its central nervous system also works due to the energy provided by the subtle electricity generated in the body. In fact, the nerve network in the body works on the principle of the electric grid and all the sense impulses are transmitted from one nerve to another by means of subtle electric currents passing from one nerve-ending to another nerve-ending called the ganglion. In short, the body of the creature is like an electric gadget, with the mind at the centre of the setup much like the control center of a huge power house representing the body of the creature. Without the energy provided by the electric subtly and imperceptibly present in the body, the creature wouldn't be able to function at all. So, the energy

present in the electric is like the *honey*, or the energy-providing vital force in Nature without which life would not function actively at all.

The *creature* is like honey for the electric because the electric gets its importance and value by being useful to the creature. Myriad creatures use/harness the majestic potentials and powers of the electric for their development and growth, much like the honeybee using the nectar from the flower to create honey which it uses for its own nourishment. If there were no creatures to use and harness the electric and its magnificent potentials, thereby developing and blooming into a vibrant and resplendent creation, the electric would have lost its glory, attraction and validity. Hence, the creature is the symbolic honey vis-à-vis the electric.

Again, since *honey* is the most important aspect of nectar extracted from the flowers by the bees and the best form it can take, and since honey possesses the powers to provide energy and vitality very necessary to sustain life as is evident from the fact that eating a little amount of honey provides direct energy to the body, honey is regarded as a metaphor for the essential vitality and energy present in *electric* as well as for the 'living entity', or the *Atma*, present inside the creature.

Since the inherent strength and powers subtly present in the electric drives the machine known as the creation, being the source of all its energy, strength, vigour and vitality, it is therefore like honey for the creation. Similarly, since the *Atma* drives the creature, it is also like honey for it.

Since honey is a metaphor for the defining virtues of power, strength, vigour etc. present in both the cases, the electric is like honey for the creature, and vice versa.

Further, no creature would be 'living' had it not been for the vital 'spark' of life present in its body as the *Atma* representing the electric energy. Similarly, the electric energy present in the body would lose its relevance if there was no *Atma* or pure consciousness present inside the body. Therefore, both these two entities are interdependent; they are hyphenated to each other. They are both like honey for each other.

The creature and the glorious virtues of the electric share a *symbiotic relationship* with each other; they both need each other. Symbolically they are like honey for each other.

²For the purposes of understanding, in metaphysical terms, the body of all living creatures has been divided into three types—viz. the gross body consisting of the external sense organs, the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect (and heart) complex, and the causal body consisting of the pure conscious element present inside the creature. At the individual level of the creature, i.e. at the micro level of creation; the gross body is called *Vishwa* because it deals with the external world and receives all the stimuli originating from it, the subtle body is called *Tejas* because it is the mind-intellect that gives the creature its fame, glory, powers, strength and potentials which are like the radiance of the sun effusing out from it and spreading in all the direction; and the causal body is called *Pragna* because it refers to the omniscient *Atma* which is wisdom and enlightenment personified.

In our text here, the gross body of the electric is its dazzling brilliance, its splendourous radiance and its blinding rays and scintillating sparks. The subtle body of this electric is its inherent quality or virtue known as its potentials, powers, energy and strength. It is this subtle body of the electric that is being referred here in relation with the subtle body of the creature known as *Tejas*. It will be noted that both these bodies have the same inherent quality in them—that of possessing great

potentials, powers, strength and energy. The Master who resides quietly in these bodies and drives them is however the supreme authority known as the *Purush* who is none else but the supreme transcendental *Brahm* personified.

The metaphor of Electric used for *Brahm* is very easy to understand. Who does not know the potentials, the strengths, the magnificent powers and stupendous energy that electric possess. It also refers to the lightening present in the clouds, which also is a discharge of electric. *Brahm* indeed possesses all the magnificence and stupendous powers, all the unique characteristics and glorious virtues of electric. *Electric* represents the essence of all the glorious virtues represented by the words strength, punch, potent, potentials, valour, vitality, energy etc. in this world. Perhaps nothing is more powerful than electric in this creation.

Since the *Atma* living in the heart of the creature is also the most powerful and important entity present inside the creature's body, it is also like electric. The *Atma* is like the battery that generates the electricity of consciousness and life which powers the machine known as the body of the creature. Therefore, both 'electric' and the 'living entity' present inside the creature are the same.

In this verse, electric is used as a metaphor to indicate the glorious potentials of *Brahm* and the *Atma*. See also Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 4 in this context.]

9. Thundering and rumbling rain-bearing clouds are akin to honey for the living creatures, while the living creature is like honey for the clouds¹. The Supreme Being who is present in the cloud as its characteristic ability to produce thunder (and rain as well as lightening) is called its resident *Purush*, while the same *Purush* resides inside the creature bestowing it with its unique abilities to speak (as in a man) or make a sound (as in non-human forms). This *Purush* is indeed called the *Atma* which gives both these entities (the cloud and the creature) their respective vitalities, powers, strengths and importance. This *Atma* is a personification of that *Purush* called *Brahm*; it is eternal, infinite and imperishable; it is the ambrosia of life; it is indeed all there is to it² (9).

[Note—¹The *cloud* is like *honey* for the entire life on earth for obvious reasons—it provides the life-giving rains. The clouds rumble and thunder; they make their presence felt by doing so along with the lightening which it creates in a symbolic way to tell the creature that the supreme 'Being' present in it has matchless potentials and powers, and he is revealing himself for the benefit of the entire creation. The grand characteristics of the cloud which are so unique to it—such as its ability to store the rain which is the honey of life, and then pour it selflessly upon the earth so that all the creatures, the humblest or and the most privileged ones, can benefit from it, its ability to create electric and its stupendous energy and punch in the form of lightening, and its ability to reach even the distant land without any hindrance, i.e. its ability to move—are all indicative of the glorious characteristic abilities, potentials and dynamic powers of *Brahm*.

When the farmer hears the thunder of cloud, he realises that the rains are round the corner, he rejoices and prepares his field for them. The sight of the cloud that would water his fields is like his finding the 'honeycomb' (cloud) of 'honey' (rain); the sound of the cloud renews his vigour and hope of a good life. In case the rains are untimely, this very

sound of the cloud speaks to the farmer and warns him to avoid disaster by making sure that his field produce is safely stored in the barn before it is damaged by the rain and slush. So again, this sight and sound of the cloud gives him relief. Hence, the *sound* that the cloud makes is like its attempt to tell the creature that *Brahm* is there to sustain and protect it.

Even as the honeybee collects nectar from so many flowers and then converts them into honey which is stored at one place called the honeycomb, the rain water of the clouds are collected from all sources on earth such as the oceans, seas, rivers, streams, lakes, lagoons, ponds etc., and then stored in the cloud which is like that *honeycomb*, and the rain itself is like the *honey* stored in it. Since the drop of rain is collected by the process of evaporation, it is pure and pristine because it is like distilled water. Therefore it resembles drops of honey.

The rain sustains life on earth and aids in agriculture and fosters general greenery and vibrant life of the landscape. It is used by all the creatures, directly or indirectly, for their sustenance, development and well being. Had the clouds lacked these noble and grand qualities of providing rain to all with stoic equanimity which make them so sought after as magnanimous, benevolent and generous revelations of *Brahm*, they would have lost their significance and importance for the creature. The clouds draw their strength and pleasure from their ability to support diverse forms of vibrant and verdant life on this planet which thrive on rain. This is a symbolic way of saying that the creatures are like the honey for the clouds because the creature embodies all the glorious virtues of rain as a life infusing and sustaining medium. A healthy and happy creature personifies the best of qualities in life, and since his happiness and health depend on the rain falling from the clouds which provide him with sufficient food, the creature is a manifested form of the ambrosia, or honey, stored in the clouds as rain.

According to Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition, canto 5, section 10, verse nos. 5-6, the Atma of the creature, after its death and exiting from the body, goes up, resides in the moon, and when it wants to come back to the earth after the good effects of its past deeds have worn out, it rides piggy-back on the rain drops to come down and 'seed' the earth with new life forms, and the chain continues endlessly. Therefore, we can say that the rain drops act like seed that have seeded life on this earth. Hence, the rain is like the honey for all the living creatures on this earth.

Since the clouds are praised for their rain content, therefore the rain is like the honey for the clouds which is like the honeycomb for the life-sustaining rain which is a metaphor for honey itself. The water is an essential element for all living creatures, as has been established in verse no. 2 above. Therefore the rain in the cloud and the water in the earth as well as the water element in the sky as moisture and the water element present inside the creature in many forms such as blood, urine, mucous, bile, intestinal fluids etc. are all linked to each other by the one common element called 'water', and obviously water is the nearest analogue for honey and nectar.

It will be observed that when a man is very thirsty, when his throat is parched dry, he finds it difficult to speak. It is also during dehydration of the body that the man loses his power to express himself. This establishes the importance of water for the living creature. So the ability to speak or make any utterance from the throat as a sure sign of life depends upon water, and therefore it is like honey for the creature.

Hence, both the rain-bearing cloud and the creature have a *symbiotic relationship* with each other.

²The rain-bearing cloud is the one that thunders and rumbles, and not the rainless ones as seen during the winter floating lazily across the sky. This is indicative of the fact that there must be something special to the dark clouds that gives them the energy and strength to do so; the dark clouds show signs of life and vitality that the white fluffy cotton-like clouds seen in the clear sky lack. This unique characteristic of these clouds are symbolic indications of the presence of some supernatural power that is hidden in them that enables and empowers them to not only rumble and thunder but also to bear rain and pour it along with the bolt of lightening to cap its show of its immense capabilities and prowess. So, this magnificent quality of the dark rain-bearing cloud to literally 'speak' in the form of the thunder, to show 'light' in the form of lightening, and to 'inject life' in the form of rain which can be compared to the sperm, is the revelation of the glorious and divine virtues and stupendous potentials of the supreme transcendental *Brahm* residing inherently in these clouds as their unique abilities. This *Brahm* is called the *Purush* as it resides in the body of the cloud.

The creature's body is ordinarily a lifeless entity. It can speak or make any sound only because it has 'life' in it in the form of the same *Purush* that enables the cloud to speak as its thunder and rumble. Thus, the faculty of speech and the voice that it represents, as well as all forms of sound that the living body of the creature makes, are symbolic representations of the presence of consciousness in it, and the latter is known as the *Atma* or soul of the creature. Bereft of this conscious *Atma*, the body wouldn't utter a word or make any sound as is evident when a dead body lies lifeless on the ground.

Thus, the same authority that empowers the cloud to rumble and thunder is the one that empowers the creature to speak or make a sound. In other words, the 'sound' and the 'faculty of speech' are visible manifestations of the magnificent abilities of that one Supreme Being that can induce life in such inane and lifeless entities as the cloud and the gross body of the creature.

The rest of the meaning of this verse is the same as the previous ones.]

10. The Akash (sky, space) is like the honey for all the living creatures, and the latter are like honey for the former¹. The Supreme Being that dwells in this visible form of space called the Akash, pervading uniformly throughout it, is called *Purush* (here referring to the *Viraat Purush* who forms the macrocosmic gross body of the creation). This *Purush* is eternal, infinite and imperishable (like the sky/space), is radiant and self-illuminated, and is like the ambrosia called *Amrit*. The same *Purush* lives imperceptibly inside the invisible subtle sky around the heart of the body of the creature, called the 'Hriday-Akash'. It is indeed the *Atma* that resides as the *Purush* in this subtle sky (*Hriday-Akash*); it is eternal, infinite and imperishable, it is radiant and self-illuminated, and it is like *Amrit*². This is all there is to it (10).

[Note—¹The sky is the subtlest element in creation. Everything that exists needed a place to be conceived and develop, to grow and mature. The best example to visualise this is to see how a new sapling grows up facing the sky; had there been no space and had that sapling confined to, say, a small cavity or crevice in a piece of rock, it would have died in its

nascent stage. The cosmic space of the celestial sky was like the womb in which the supreme Brahm conceived the entire creation in the very beginning. The sky harbours and stores everything in creation, such as all the entities mentioned above from verse nos. 1-9, i.e. the earth, the water, the fire, the wind, the sun, the directions, the moon, the electric representing the cosmic energy. It is like the honeycomb soaked with all the best, the most glorious and most magnificent units of creation which is a metaphoric way of saying that it stores *honey* or the essential ingredients or constituents of creation without which life is just not possible. All living creatures need earth to dwell in, water to survive, fire to provide them with energy, wind to breathe, sun to give them natural light, heat and energy, moon to light the night sky and provide coolness, the electric to charge them with necessary energy and vitality, and the cloud to shower the ambrosia of life in the form of rain. Each of these units has its location in the sky. Therefore, the sky is like a virtual honeycomb storing them as its honey; the former cannot be alienated from the latter.

We can visualise this conception in a different way. The supreme Brahm pervades the entire sky in its macrocosmic manifestation as the Viraat Purush. According to the Upanishadic version of genesis of creation, the entire creation came into being from the body of the Viraat Purush. If we were to treat the sky as the cosmic womb, then the embryo of this creation drew its nourishment from all the fundamental elements present in it just like the individual creature draws its nourishment from honey. Therefore, the sky is like honey as far as the creation and its units, the individual creature, are concerned.

The *creature* is like honey for the sky because the latter has any use and importance only till there is someone who benefits from it and honours it for its glorious virtues. As has been explained above, all the living beings live in the space of the sky; all the magnificent units of creation also likewise live in the space of the sky. They are like the 'honey stored in the honeycomb of the sky'.

There is another way to interpret this conception. The honeybee collects nectar from a number of flowers and then converts it into honey. All the forms that life takes in this creation are made from the fundamental elements mentioned in this Brahmin—such as the habitat represented by the earth, the life giving elixir represented by the water, the energy and vitality represented by the fire, the vital life infusing breath represented by the wind, the light and energy represented by the sun, the ambrosia represented by the moon, the cosmic energy represented by the electric, and the container or vessel represented by the sky. They are collated and harnessed by the supreme creator to create the individual creature of this vast creation. Hence, the 'individual creature is like the honey' formed from various sources of nectar representing the various elements of creation that the creator has stored in the sky.

²The supreme transcendental authority known as *Brahm* is one who has its abode in the realm which has no physical boundaries and limitations. The sky perfectly fits the bill. Even as ordinary citizenry of the far reaches of an emperor's worldly domain rarely have any chance to actually see and hear their emperor first hand, and the only knowledge that they ever have of him is by hearing about him from others, the ordinary mortal creatures rarely are fortunate to realise that Brahm first hand. Only the few privileged ones, such as wise sages, seers, mystics and ascetics, have this honour just like some ministers in the close circle of the emperor are the only ones who are well acquainted with him and

have a daily interaction with him. But nevertheless, the writ of the emperor spreads throughout the length and breadth of the realm. So likewise this Brahm has his writ prevailing in the entire stretch of his creation symbolised by this sky element.

Brahm has revealed himself as the *Viraat Purush* who represents the all-pervading macrocosmic invisible gross form of Brahm which is as vast, infinite and measureless as the sky itself. The Atma of this Viraat is Brahm known as 'Ishwar' or the supreme Authority who is the Supreme Being or Lord of this creation.

Upanishads have described the origin of creation from this Viraat Purush whereby it is stated that this entire spectrum of creation was essentially a manifestation or revelation of this Viraat; each unit was a complete image of this Viraat in its microcosmic form. Therefore, the gross body of the creature is the gross body of the Viraat, and the Atma of the creature is like that Brahm who is the essential identity of the Viraat.

In other words, what is there at the macro level is the same as what is present at the micro level; the former is called *Viraat* because it is vast, infinite and measureless in all scales of measurements and physical dimensions, while the latter is called *Atma* or atomic soul as it is the individually based local unit which forms the essential identity of that Viraat in the microcosmic form in the body of the individual creature, acting as the basic and essential identifying benchmark for the Viraat in this mortal world.

The Akash or the sky is not a vacuum because if there was nothing to fill it, the Akash would have collapsed into itself much like an inflated balloon from which air is sucked out—the balloon immediately collapses. What then fills this sky from the metaphysical perspective? Well, it is Brahm in the form of the Viraat. Then, it is easy to understand how the creation was moulded from this Viraat—if the sky is considered as the cosmic womb filled with this Viraat, then obviously the embryo of creation came into being from the womb's fluids, i.e. from the Viraat. It follows therefore that this embryo would naturally have all the unique characteristics of the Viraat, and nobody else.

Now, even as the glorious and radiantly self-illuminated Brahm lives in the sky called the visible *Akash*, its counterpart in the individual creature, i.e. the Atma, lives in the subtle sky of the heart, called the *Hriday-Akash*. The sublime Atma, being an image of the supreme transcendental authority known as Brahm, has all the characteristics possessed by the latter—viz. it is eternal, infinite and imperishable; it is like a fount of Amrit or ambrosia of eternity and bliss; and it is equally radiant and self-illuminated and as wise and enlightened as the Brahm.

In the example or scenario visualised above, the identity of the cosmic Father, the Brahm, was transferred to the offspring, the creature, as its Atma. That is why, the creature's body is an image of Viraat and the Atma is an image of Brahm.

Refer also to Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 5 in this context.]

11. Dharma (righteousness, nobility of thought and conduct, virtuousness, probity and propriety) is like the honey for all the creatures, while the latter are like honey for the former¹. The glorious Supreme Being known as the Purush personifying all the good, auspicious, noble and righteous virtues in creation, that are collectively called 'Dharma', is the same one

who is present as the pure, enlightened, uncorrupt and omniscient Atma of the individual creature. That exalted Purush is the subtle, supreme, magnificent and stupendous powers, authority and glory of the transcendental Brahm personified, and so is the Atma. Both are Brahm personified; both possess the virtues, characters and qualities possessed by Brahm; both are immortal and almighty; both are like ambrosia called Amrit². This is all there is to it (11).

[Note—(a) ¹*Dharma* is the basis of all goodness that exists in this creation. It is like the magnum opus of code of proper conduct and thought, of ethics and morality; it is a personification of such glorious virtues as righteousness and auspiciousness, of probity and propriety, of holiness, goodness and divinity. Dharma is like a constitution of a country which guides the populace as to what is expected from them as the right behaviour so that the society leads a happy and regulated and ordered life. A situation that is opposite of Dharma is called Adharma that would lead to perverse and reckless behaviour which in its wake would cause utter chaos. Dharma is considered as the ‘truthful, righteous and auspicious’ form of doing anything. All the Gods are deemed to be followers of Dharma, whilst their unrighteous brethrens called the Demons are just the opposite in their temperaments. This ‘code of conduct’ collects under one roof all the best elements of behaviour, conduct, thoughts, outlooks, temperaments, tendencies, speech/words, deeds, actions and ideas that would make mankind and other forms of creation conform to a well laid-out and thoughtful plan of existence. In other words, Dharma is like *honey* because just like the latter being a refined form of nectar collected from various sources by the bee, it is also the refined and distilled form of all sorts of conducts and thoughts that are imaginable in this creation. And just like the honey providing energy and nourishment to the body of the body of the creature, these codes of moral conduct give spiritual energy and moral nourishment to the creature.

The *creature* is the ultimate beneficiary of this code called Dharma; it is meant for it just like the nectar is meant to be converted into honey to be used by the bee in future. So, if the code of Dharma is like the nectar of righteousness and auspiciousness, then the righteous creature is like *honey* for it. Further, this code of Dharma is not easily available and understood by ordinary mortals, but the exemplary life which a noble and virtuous man leads according to this code helps others to practically see for themselves these codes in action and benefit from them without taking the trouble of searching for these codes anywhere. The allegory of the honeybee doing all the leg work and labouring hard to collect nectar from different flowers and then making it useful and palatable for the man in the form of honey is most apt here when applied to such noble men.

²There may be more than one way of defining this code of Dharma as there has been a legendary list of enlightened and wise sages and seers who had interpreted them in various ways according to the prevalent custom, circumstances and times. What is considered Dharma in one given situation might not be so under a different situation. For example, telling a lie is not a Dharma way of speaking under normal situations, but if it is used to save the life of an innocent person who has been falsely implicated by sinful people, then countering their sinful deeds by speaking a lie that can save this man’s life is not to be regarded as violation of the code of Dharma.

Thus, the emphasis in this verse is to understand the essence and fundamental intent of any given code, and not its exterior form in its words or form of its literal text. That is, the essence of Dharma, the soul of Dharma, the Atma of Dharma is the ultimate Truth and Reality of creation personified in the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety. In other words, it is *Brahm* personified, because *Brahm* stands for everything noble and truthful in creation. The underlying 'truth' in any given Dharma is the personification or revelation of all the pure, pristine, uncorrupt, immaculate, holy, sublime and divine virtues of creation represented by *Brahm*. It is indeed *Brahm* that is embodied in Dharma.

Again, since the 'spirit' of anything is its basic and fundamental defining characteristic feature, it is its soul or *Atma* because the latter is as truthful and honest as the former. In this case therefore, the basic truthful, righteous and auspicious spirit of Dharma is like the *Atma* of the creature. If the creature's body is an image of the *Purush* (*Brahm* personified), then its *Atma* is Dharma personified.

(b) We can interpret this verse in another way as follows:--¹It is *Dharma* that forms the pivot upon which the entire edifice of creation rotates or is founded upon. Dharma acts like the strong pillar which supports the edifice of this creation, and this pillar itself rests upon *Brahm* which acts as the foundation for the entire creation. If there were no ethics, no morality, no probity and no laws, there would be utter chaos and anarchy in creation. So Dharma brings peace and tranquility, prosperity and welfare, happiness and joy in its wake. Therefore, it is like the symbolic honey as opposed to 'Adharma', or non-Dharma, which causes strife and destruction as well as degradation and bankruptcy of morals and values, which is like a poison for the spirit of the creature. Dharma is pure and invigorating like the *honey*. What honey is for the body, Dharma is for the soul of the creature.

²*Atma* is pure and uncorrupt, and Dharma's spirit is also purity and holiness. Therefore, 'Atma and Dharma are alike' in this sense. Metaphorically, *Atma* is the honey or the essence of Dharma, because it is the *Atma* which is the ultimate Truth in all that exists. The *Atma* derives its nourishment in the form of spiritual satisfaction and contentedness by following the path of Dharma. Similarly, Dharma has its importance because of the presence of the *Atma* or the sub-conscious in the creature which tells him whether what he is doing is wrong or right, thereby acting as a safeguard against the creation crumbling under the onslaught of Adharma. Since *Atma* is a personification of *Brahm* and since *Brahm* is the foundation for Dharma, both *Atma* and Dharma depend upon *Brahm*. Both have their existence because of *Brahm*. In other words, 'Brahm is the honey symbolising the best of both the *Atma* as well as the Dharma'.]

12. The Truth is the honey of all living creatures, while the latter are like honey for the former¹. The intrinsic strength, glory, potentials, power and authority that this element of creation called the Truth possesses is a manifestation of the Supreme Being who personifies Truth. This supreme authority known as *Brahm* prevails in this creation as the *Purush* that resides in the body of Truth as its soul, as its quintessential spirit. The same *Purush* resides in the bosom of the creature as its resident *Atma* which is therefore also a personification of Truth. They (i.e. the *Purush*

existing as the basic definition of the word ‘truth’, and the pure conscious Atma present inside the living creature) are eternal, infinite and imperishable, both are like the ambrosia called Amrit, and both are radiant and self-illuminated. Truth and Atma are indeed Brahm personified². That is all there is to it (12).

[Note—¹This verse is an extension of verse no. 11. *Truth* is at the core of Dharma; *truthfulness* is the visible manifestation and an embodiment of Dharma. Truth is the essence of Brahm; truthfulness is an embodiment of Brahm. Truth is the fundamental characteristic of the pure conscious Atma which is the soul or at the core of the truthful identity of the creature; truthfulness is the sublime and the most honoured quality and attribute of this Atma. In fact, truth and truthfulness are the basic spirit of the Authority known as Brahm and all that is identified with Brahm.

Truth is a value which has a paramount importance in this creation and it is like the distilled form of the best of the virtues and qualities that exist in it even as *honey* is the best form in which the different essences of different flowers, which are collected by the honeybee, are converted into. Since honey is a metaphor for the ‘best and the most valuable’ of any category or class of entities, truthfulness is also the best and the most valuable of virtues and qualities that anyone can possess.

Brahm and its manifestation the Truth are not visible in any physical form. They have a sublime and irrefutably exalted but truthful existence that is subtle and intangible. On the other hand, the creation and its living beings are physically visible and tangible. Anything that is actually visible and verifiable is regarded ‘true’ as compared to anything that is irrefutably and unequivocally true but not directly seen and verified. Thus, the *creature* is like the *honey* because it proves the existence of the element known as *Truth* in creation which is invisible, just like the honey that is visible but the nectar from which it is made is not visible.

The creature draws its moral strength and courage from being truthful, and truth is the best quality or the most valuable asset that any creature can ever expect to possess. The virtue of truth and the quality of truthfulness therefore depend upon their being honoured and admired by the wise and noble ones in this creation as the best form of virtue and quality from amongst a wide range of attributes. Truth gives the man who is absolutely truthful great dignity, respect and honour in this world, while a man gives truth and truthfulness their due importance and stature by declaring that they are the best virtue, the most revered quality, and the most magnificent attribute in creation by assigning it the stature of being synonymous with Brahm.

Truth has an inherent strength in it; truth ultimately prevails and wins. Truth is everlasting as opposed to falsehood which is transient. Truth gives mental peace, bliss and happiness; it nourishes the soul of the creature. So it is like honey. Truth provides moral courage and strength to the creature; truth encourages and gives solace to the Atma of the creature as compared to falsehood. Honey also nourishes and provides strength and energy to the creature. So ‘truth is like honey’.

Any person who speaks the truth becomes renowned for his truthfulness; he is praised, admired and honoured by the whole world for this unique and rare quality in him. So the person who is truthful is like the ‘honey’ for all the noble and auspicious virtues in creation because this person is a visible proof of the fact that truthfulness is highly regarded as the best virtue by all in this creation. In short, therefore,

truth is like the energising honey for the Atma or spirit of the creature even as the creature lends truth its importance and glory by being truthful and acquiring tremendous fame and reputation as a virtuous and truthful man, as compared to a man who speaks lie and acquires a bad name, a bad reputation and ignominy as a vile and evil man who cannot be relied upon.

They, the Truth and the creature, therefore exhibit a *symbiotic relationship*; they both honour each other and need each other.

²Truth is immutable, imperishable, eternal, uniform and universal—the attributes specially belonging to Brahm. Hence, Truth is indeed a ‘personification of Brahm’. Since, ‘truth is the honey of creation’, being the metaphor for the only real essence worth pursuing and admiring in the otherwise deluding, illusionary, deceptive, misleading and ignorance-ridden deluding material world of falsehoods (i.e. a world made up of Maya), and since Brahm is truthful, it follows that ‘Brahm is like the honey’ in creation. Since ‘Atma is the truthful image of this Brahm’, it also follows that the pure and pristine ‘Atma is like honey’ for the creature too. Hence, the *Atma, Brahm and Truth* are all synonyms.]

13. The Human Being is like the honey for all other creatures of creation, and the latter are like honey for the former¹. Amongst the human beings, those who are erudite, sagacious, wise, enlightened and self-realised represent the glorious supreme Purush who is omniscient and most exalted in this creation. That same Purush resides as the Atma of an individual man. Indeed, they (i.e. the Purush present in the form of the humankind, especially the noble amongst them, as well as the Atma present as pure consciousness in the man) are eternal, infinite and imperishable as the ‘truth’, they are the symbolic ambrosia of creation, and they are Brahm personified². Verily, this is all there is to it (13).

[Note--¹The *human being* is at the top rung of the evolutionary ladder. A human being is like *honey* in creation because he is considered as being always superior to the rest of the members of the creation. Just like the honeybee that collects nectar from numerous flowers and then converts these samples into one uniform entity known as honey which represents the best of essence present in all the different varieties of nectar collected from a wide variety of flowers, the supreme creator created human beings as the best example of his craftsmanship. He bestowed the man with all the majestic attributes and potentials that he himself possessed. In short, the man represents the best of life forms in creation. This is why he is compared with the honey. All other living creatures depend upon the mercy of humans, whether they are domesticated animals, wild animals of the forest, or insects or worms. A man would tend to his livestock but kill other animals for food or sport. Even plants need the mercy of humans for their existence and survival as is evident from the fact that a man spends so much time in attending to his pet plants in his garden but recklessly and mercilessly cuts down forests.

Similarly, all the *living creatures* are like *honey* for the humans because a man depends upon the former for all his needs—e.g. the man needs animals in every field of life, such as horses and bullocks for his cart, poultry and fish for food, livestock/cattle for domestication and helping him out in his fields, etc. Even humble creatures help him in some way or the other—e.g. a silk worm produces silk, the earth worm tills the earth, bacteria curdles milk to form curd, honeybees produce honey, domesticated animals such as the cow provide him with cow dung

which gives him manure besides providing milk, and so on and so forth. He needs plants for food, for providing firewood, for protection against heat of the sun as is evident when a man takes shelter under the tree during scorching summers, for herbs for his diseases, etc.

So all the forms of life are used by humans for their own sustenance much like one uses honey for providing much needed nourishment and energy to the body. They are like the symbolic honey as far as the human being is concerned, because they help him in many ways like the honey which provides nourishment to the creature. The humans in turn give their protection to other forms of creatures as when he looks after his livestock, feeds his animals, waters his plants and his fields to help them grow and bloom, and generally protects the members of the animal as well as the plant kingdom. Therefore he is like honey for them because he extends them his benevolent patronage and cover. They both love each other, and are dependent upon each other. Hence, the human and the rest of the life forms in creation represented by all the animals and the plants have a mutual *symbiotic relationship*.

²*Brahm* is the supreme Lord of the entire creation at the macro level much like the *man* is in this visible creation at the micro level. Since *Brahm* resides nowhere else other than this creation, or in other words this creation is the dwelling place of *Brahm*, it follows that the gross body of *Brahm* at the macro level known as the *Viraat Purush* is the same as the gross body of the *creature* at the micro level. Similarly, man lives in this world and no where outside of it, so he represents *Brahm*. *Brahm* controls this creation much like the man who controls life on this planet. Again, since man is the most evolved species in creation, the best sample of creation, he represents the best manifestation of *Brahm*.

If the human race is regarded as the visible macrocosm, then the *Purush* has revealed himself as all the members of this race, while the *Atma* of the members is like the cosmic Soul or *Brahm* residing in that *Purush*. This *Atma* is truthful like its principal, the supreme *Brahm* who is omnipresent and all-pervading, is truthful and universal, is eternal and imperishable, and it the fount of bliss and peace called *Amrit*.

Since *Brahm* takes care of the entire creation, and the human being also takes care of the rest of the creatures who are under him, the human being is like *Brahm* for the rest of the creation.

The comparison of the man and the human race to *Brahm* and the exalted *Purush* is a symbolic way of saying that the man occupies the most exalted stature in the hierarchy of creation on this earth just like the *Viraat Purush* is the most divine and supreme Lord amongst the Gods of heaven.

‘There is nothing besides *Brahm*’; *Brahm* pervades uniformly everywhere. *Brahm* is called the *Purush* because he lives in the creation at the macro level just as the conscious *Atma* living in the gross body of the creature at the micro level. All the creatures are embodiments of that *Purush* whose *Atma* is *Brahm*. Since *Brahm* resides in the entire creation as its *Atma*, and since the *Atma* is the essence or the ‘honey’ of the entire creation and its resident creatures, the humblest as well as the most exalted, there is no difference between the human being representing the *Viraat Purush* and the rest of the creation.

In other words, since *Atma* is the honey or essence of the human being, and this *Atma* also resides in the rest of the creatures of this creation, this symbolic ‘honey’ links the human being with the rest of the creation. It also likewise links the individual creature at the micro level

to the cosmos at the macro level, because this Atma is Brahm personified.

It is to be noted that this verse describes Brahm in its 'visible manifestation' as the gross body of creation represented by the man and the human race. This is the macro level of 'visible' revelation of Brahm. The following verse no. 14 will describe the same Brahm in its micro level as the 'invisible' Atma of the individual creature.]

14. The Atma (soul, spirit) is like honey for all the living creatures, while the latter are like honey for the former¹. The pure conscious factor or element present in the creature as its Atma is the super consciousness known as Brahm. The macrocosmic revelation of Brahm is the Viraat Purush at the macro level, while that same Purush has revealed himself as the creature having the Atma. The primary entity in both is the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, who is eternal, infinite and imperishable, who is like the ambrosia called Amrit, and who is radiant and self-illuminated. That is indeed the Atma of the creation². This is all there is to it (14).

[Note--¹The *Atma* refers to the consciousness present inside the gross body of an individual creature. This Atma is immortal though it dwells in the mortal body. Similarly, Brahm is immortal though it dwells in a mortal world as its all-pervading essence known as the Atma. *Honey* is a metaphor for something that is the essence, the juice, the sap, having not only the sweetness and succulence of the primary source but is the best and distilled form of it. In the case of the honey produced from the flowers, the primary source is the nectar, while in the case of the Atma of the creation the primary source is Brahm revealed in the form of the various basic elements of creation as listed in this Brahmin. These elements* act as fundamental building blocks of creation symbolising the individual units of nectar collected from different flowers from which the honeybee, represented by Brahm, had created pure honey in the form of the pure conscious Atma of the creation. The honeycomb in which this cosmic honey was kept by Brahm was the body of the Viraat Purush. At the level of the visible creation, the body of the creature was this honeycomb in which the Atma became the symbolic honey.

The Atma is obviously the only truthfully pure essence, the most refined form in which all the individual entities of creation exist. The Atma provides the essence called life and consciousness which are characterised by wisdom, erudition and enlightenment to all the creatures; without the Atma nothing else in this creation is real and meaningful. Thus, the 'Atma is like the honey' for all the creatures.

The Atma has any relevance only as long as there is life on this earth, only as long as there are *creatures* with a body that need consciousness to enable their otherwise lifeless body to function and perform the different deeds that the creature does. If there were no living creation and creatures with a body that need consciousness and wisdom, there would have been no need for the Atma. Therefore, the 'creature is like the honey' for the Atma; the Atma has an importance that is directly related to a living being in this creation.

Upanishads exhort the aspirant to seek this honey-like Atma which is the microcosmic counterpart of Brahm and the truthful essence of creation. Since 'honey' is one though it is sourced from numerous flowers by the honeybee which works tirelessly and endlessly to collect nectar from innumerable flowers and then store it in the honeycomb as

the honey, the knowledge contained in the scriptures are collected by the erudite and wise people, digested by them and converted into 'honey' in the form of *truthful knowledge* about the Atma. Like the honey, this knowledge is also 'one', and 'non-dual', even though it has been collected from various scriptures. The truthful knowledge about which the scriptures talk about is the supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm, and its presence in the creature as its consciousness called the Atma.

In other words, all that is 'non-Atma' is not the truth, and therefore it is not the honey. Hence, the Atma is like the honey for all the creatures because it is the essence of their truthful existence, nature and form. Since Atma resides in the gross body of the creature, and the Atma cannot live without the gross body, the latter is like the honey for the Atma, simply because the Atma loves to dwell in the body and benefits from the deeds done by this body. The Atma enjoys the comforts and pleasures of the body; the Atma interacts with the world through the medium of the body. Because the body is the source of all worldly comforts and pleasures that the Atma enjoys, it is very dear to the Atma; it is like honey for the Atma. Therefore, the body of the creature which is usually identified with the creature himself in this world is like the honey for the Atma. But since the body of the creature has no value if there was no consciousness represented by the Atma residing in its bosom, the Atma is like the honey for the creature.

²It is a well established principle of Vedanta that *Brahm* and *Atma* are both pure and pristine consciousness personified, the former at the cosmic macro level, and the latter at the level of the individual creature of the creation. Both Brahm and Atma are mystical entities that are subtle and sublime; both possess such divine and holy attributes as being eternal, infinite and imperishable, as being self-illuminated, splendourous and radiant, as being omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent, amongst other such divine characteristics. Brahm and Atma are enigmatic and mysterious in the sense that not even the best compendium of Gyan (truthful knowledge and wisdom) pertaining to the reality and absolute truth in creation has been able to define and describe them. They finally decided to call the Brahm as 'Neti-Neti', or neither this nor that. In other words, it is impossible to define and categorise Brahm and its image the Atma. At the cosmic level of creation, Brahm has revealed himself in the body of the Viraat Purush whose Atma was Brahm called the Ishwar. At the level of the visible creation, these same entities were called the Vishwa meaning the world represented by the creature, and the Atma called consciousness respectively.

Since Brahm is a synonym of Truth, it follows that anything that is not Brahm is not the truth. Therefore, this world is true in the sense that it is a revelation of Brahm, but only that aspect of this creation that is Atma or pure and pristine consciousness is 'true' while the rest is 'un-true'. This is the point emphasised in this verse—that the Atma is the only truth in this visible creation, and therefore it is the honey of creation because it is the best part of it.

*According to the various Upanishads and Purans, the fundamental 'elements' of creation are also called the *Tattwas*. The word Tattwa has many connotations as follows—(i) the true, essential and primary or fundamental aspect of anything; (ii) the elementary reality; (iii) the true or real state; (iv) the primary Prakriti-Nature; (v) the truthful nature of the Atma or soul of individual creature at the micro level as well as that at the macro level of the Atma which is universal, all-pervading,

omnipresent, transcendental and almighty Soul of the entire creation; (vi) the 'Mana' consisting of the mind and the heart complex; (vii) the Sun; (viii) the universal, eternal elements that form the basic building blocks of the entire creation; (ix) elementary form in which the entire creation exists.

Now let us examine the various Tattwas or Elements of creation.

(a) According to Harvansha Puran, 14840, and Mahabharat, xii, 11242, there are *twenty-four* basic elements or Tattwas. These twenty-four fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the essential ingredients which go in to make up the body of a creature, and they are—(a) Prakriti (nature, inherent tendencies and inclinations, the fundamental truth about anything that decide its character and existential mode); (b) Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination); (c) Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness); (d) the eleven organs (five organs of perceptions—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue; five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory; one organ of intelligence—mind); and (e) the five vital Prans (the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apaana or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaana or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyan or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaana or the wind that helps to rise); and (f) the five perceptions (sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing) bringing the total to $= 1+1+1+1+5+5 = 24$.

(b) So, according to Sankhya Shastra, there are *twenty-five fundamental Elements or Tattwas* as follows—Purush (the primal cosmic Male; the Viraat Purush), Prakriti (primal Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) $= 25$.

According to Mahopanishad, 1/4–6 of Sam Veda tradition, these twenty-five elements or Tattwas are the following—five organs of perception (ear, nose, tongue, eye, skin) + five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals, excretory) + one Mana (mind) + one Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) + one Pran (the vital life-giving breath; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life) + one Atma (soul) + one Buddhi (intelligence, wisdom, discrimination) + five Perceptions (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch) + five Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air, space) = twenty-five elements.

(c) The *twenty-sixth* Tattwa or Element is 'Hiranya-garbh', the cosmic subtle body of creation, or the cosmic golden egg from which Viraat had emerged.

(d) The *twenty-seventh* Tattwa or Element is known as 'Ishwar', the macrocosmic causal body of creation. Obviously, all these elements are junior to the primary source called the Supreme Being or Brahm. Therefore, the Supreme Being or Brahm is neither the creature nor the Purush; he is neither the visible world nor the invisible creation taken independently. He is beyond such limiting definitions. Therefore, he is has certain qualities that do not fall within the ambit of ordinary creation; he has some extraordinary elements that are beyond the realm of comprehension.

(e) According to the definition of Prakriti as described in the standard Sanskrit-English Dictionary of Sir Monier Monier-Williams, M.A., K.C.I.E., the *eight* fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the following—one Avyakta (that supreme entity that is unmanifest and untangible but

nevertheless at the basis of everything that exist) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (the inherent nature of having ego and pride) + and five Tanmatras or the subtle bodies consisting of the five sense perceptions, such as the faculties of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. These are also called the Prakriti or nature of an individual creature at the micro level as well as of the creation at the macro level.

According to the philosophy of Vedanta, these *eight* fundamental Elements or Tattwas in creation are the following—earth, water, fire, wind and sky constituting the gross body of the creature, and the two other subtle elements consisting of the Mana (mind and intellect) and ‘Ahankar’ (ego, pride) which constitute the subtle body of the creature.

(f) According to Varaha Upanishad, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are *ninty four* Tattwas or elements. These are the following-- five organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue + five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital + the five vital Prans which are the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apaana or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaana or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyaana or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaana or the wind that helps to rise + Mana (mind) + Buddhi (intellect) + Ahankar (ego and pride) + Chitta (sub-conscious and memory) + five Maha-Bhuts—earth, water, fire, air, space + the three types of bodies of the creature—gross, subtle and causal + the three states of existence of the consciousness—waking/Jagrat, dreaming/Swapna and deep sleep/Sushupta + the union or interaction of these thirty five elements produces the collective unit or entity which is called the twenty sixth element + the six faults that are inherent in anything that comes into being—Asti (the notion of existence in present; the concept that anything is there), Jaati (that which is born), Vardhate (that which develops and increases), Parinam (result, fruit), Kshaya (that which is subject to decay) and Naash (destruction and ruin) + the six Urmis or shortcomings—Ashana (hunger), Pipasa (thirst), Shoka (sorrows, grief, sufferings, torments), Moha (attractions, infatuations, delusions, attachments), Jara (old age and weakness), Mritu (death) + the six parts of the gross body—skin, blood, flesh, marrow, abdomen or stomach and bones + the six enemies—Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice) + the three states in which the living creature interacts with the surrounding world resulting in them being identified by different names—Vishva corresponding to the waking state of consciousness, Taijas corresponding to the dreaming state of consciousness, and Pragya corresponding to the deep sleep state of consciousness + the three types of inherent qualities that decide the basic character of an individual—Sata or the best and the noblest of the three, Raja or the medium quality, and Tama or the meanest and lowest quality + the three types of deeds—those done in the past, those done in the future, and those which are being done in the present + the five actions—speak, accept, go, to expel or discard or eliminate, and enjoy and have bliss + the four functions of the mind—Sankalps (make determinations and volitions; to make vows and promises; have firm aspirations), Adhyavashaya (to remain in a state of constant flux and activity), Abhiman (pride), Avadharana (to have firmness of views, certainties, determined mind, deduction), Mudit (to be happy and exhilarated), Karuna (compassionate, mercy, pity, empathy),

Maitri (friendship, brotherhood) and Upeksha (dispassion, disinterest, neglect, indifference) + the celestial Gods representing the various forces of Nature—the directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Sun God, Pracheta (Prajapati, the guardian of mortal creation), Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun god and the physician of the Gods), Agni (Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (Vishnu), Mritu (the Death God; Yam), Chandrama (the Moon God), Brahma (the creator), Rudra (one of the angry forms of Shiva), Kshetranya (custodian of a particular realm or area; the different custodians of the creation), and Ishwar (the supreme transcendental Lord or Brahm) == total is *ninty four* elements or Tattwas.]

15. Verily, the Atma is the lord, master and emperor of all living creatures. Just like all the spokes of a wheel are pegged to the hub or the pivot of the wheel, all the creatures, the Gods, the different worlds and the various forms of Pran (vital winds) are linked to the Atma. The Atma is their pivot; without the Atma they all fall apart. This is all there is to it (15).

[Note--We must note here that the *Atma* is the central point around which the entire creation revolves much like the wheel around its hub in this verse, or even like the solar system where the sun is the focal point around which all the planets revolve. This analogy of the sun cited here in this note is important because the Atma is considered to be as glorious and radiant as the sun, and like the sun, the Atma too sustains life in the creature, the Gods, the different world etc. which are like the different planets moving around the central hub called the sun.

Another important point is that the *Atma* and the *Pran* are treated as different entities here, though both are regarded as being synonymous with each other in other parts of the Upanishad (see 2/5/4, 2/3/4-5, 2/1/20, 1/5/20 and 1/3/19). The subtle difference between the Atma and the Pran is highlighted here. 'Pran' is another name for the life-infusing and life-sustaining vital wind called breath present inside the creature. Pran is a metaphor for life, e.g. we say that such and such organ of the body has 'Pran' in it, or in other words that organ is 'living' and 'not dead'. In this aspect, Pran is like the Atma because it provides consciousness, or life and the sense of awareness to that particular organ. But 'Atma', in its primary meaning on the other hand, is the pure consciousness present in the creature as manifested by the presence of the sublime virtues that illuminate the intellect of the creature, such as the virtues of wisdom, enlightenment, erudition and sagacity as well as the various skills and expert knowledge that are exhibited by the creature.

Pran, in its technical connotation known as the wind or breath, can make a man live, but the Pran cannot make him enlightened and wise; it cannot make him intelligent and discriminating like the Atma. Both the Atma and the Pran depend upon each other, for the Atma or pure consciousness cannot live in the body of a creature if there was no Pran or breath in it. Similarly, a living being without consciousness or without enlightenment, wisdom, erudition and intelligence is as good as a piece of wood which is a part of a living tree but has no intelligence in it.

The illumination of enlightenment and wisdom inherently present in the bosom of a creature is his Atma, while the breath and life present in his organs is the Pran; they go hand in hand. For all practical purposes

therefore, they are similar to each other. Or, they are like the ‘honey’ for each other as well as for the creature.

The Atma is treated as the Lord of all living creatures because without the presence of pure consciousness, the living creature would be good for nothing. The word Atma is synonymous with the soul and the spirit. It is therefore the essence of life and creation.]

16. This magnificent metaphysical process of meditation called ‘Madhu Vidya’ which uses ‘honey’ as a metaphor for the Atma and Brahm had been first enunciated by sage Dadhyang Atharvan for the benefit of sages Ashwini Kumars.

The wise and learned sage who enunciated this Brahmin said to the Ashwini Kumars—‘Oh Ashwini Kumars! Just like the clouds create rain after rumbling and thundering, I shall reveal the great secret of Madhu Vidya to both of you who have the head of a horse. In the process, I shall also reveal the terrible deeds done by you¹ so that you can benefit from that sublime and divine knowledge (pertaining to the Atma and Brahm with the honey as a metaphor)’ (16).

[Note--¹According to the revered Adi Shankarachary’s commentary on this Upanishad, when the two sages Ashwini Kumars, who were the twin sons of the Sun God, wished to learn this ‘Madhu Vidya’ from sage Dadhyang Atharvan, the latter told them that Indra, the king of Gods and of the rains, had threatened to cut off his head if he ever preached it to anyone. Ashwini Kumars replied that they have a way out; they would sever the head of Dadhyang and keep it aside, replacing it with that of a horse. When Indra would chop off the head of the horse, they would then graft the original head back on his shoulders. To cut the head of a Brahmin is a most horrible, sinful and unpardonable deed, especially when done for selfish ends. But since the selfishness here pertained to acquiring sublime, divine and eclectic knowledge about the Atma and Brahm, that deed would lead to spiritual upliftment and enlightenment as it was not done for any personal worldly gains, and therefore it was pardonable. So Dadhyang accepted the proposal. Then Ashwini Kumars fixed the head of a horse on Dadhyang Atharvan. When he preached, Indra came and snapped the horse-head. The Ashwini Kumars replaced it with Dadhyang’s original head. The ‘cruel deed’ done by them was the severing of a Brahmin’s head.

Ashwini Kumars are regarded as the twin sons of Ashwini, the wife of the Sun God disguised as one of the horses of the Sun’s chariot. So when Ashwini Kumars wished to learn about ‘Aditya Vidya’ or ‘Madhu Vidya’ (as detailed in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 3), they were actually worshipping their father, the Sun God. They are the patron deities of the different directions and are regarded as the medicine men of the Gods.

The word ‘Atharvan’ means one who is an expert in the Atharva Veda. Hence, this gentleman Dadhyang was an expert in the fire sacrifice where the Atharva Veda was used as the main text, and was especially dedicated to the performance of the horse sacrifice.]

17. This ‘Madhu Vidya’ was preached by Dadhyang Atharvan to Ashwini Kumars. The wise teacher who was an expert in the Mantras (the secret formulas in metaphysical discussions) said to them—‘Oh Ashwini Kumars! You had brought the head of a horse for this Atharvan. The truthful sage kept his word and taught the great metaphysical knowledge

known as the Madhu Vidya pertaining to the Sun God to you as promised. This mystical knowledge that he taught was most secret, esoteric, mysterious, eclectic, divine and sublime knowledge about the Sun' (17).

[Note--This 'Madhu Vidya' which entails the use of 'honey' as a metaphor for the essence of the grand and majestic virtues that the Sun stands for and personifies, is a technique of meditation upon the great metaphysical Truths in creation which pertains to the pure conscious Atma and the supreme transcendental Brahm. Besides the present Upanishad, it has also been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 3 of the Sam Veda tradition, which is regarded as one of the major Upanishads. A detailed version is included as chapter no. 2 of the anthology of Sam Veda Upanishad published in this series.

The note to verse no. 16 above explains why Dadhyang Atharvan had asked Ashwini Kumars for the head of the horse.]

18. This 'Madhu Vidya', which is the metaphysical meditative technique using honey as a metaphor to describe the grand and glorious virtues of the Atma and Brahm, was preached by Dadhyang Atharvan to the Ashwini Kumars.

The enlightened sage who could envision what had transpired at the beginning of creation, said—'The supreme, transcendental and almighty Brahm had first created the creatures with two legs, and then with four legs. Then that supreme Purush (Brahm) entered those bodies in the form of a 'bird' (or like a bird entering a cave and disappearing inside it).

That is why that supreme, transcendental, attributeless and unqualified Brahm, who hitherto had no specific abode, is called a 'Purush', i.e. one who resides in a 'Pur' meaning a city, a place, a dwelling, a body or a residence. There is no 'body' in this creation in which that 'Purush' is not present; there is no 'place' in this creation where 'Brahm' as Purush does not live' (18).

[Note--This verse explains the meaning of the word *Purush* which literally means a male but actually refers to that supreme transcendental authority of creation known as Brahm who lives inside the creature as its Atma or soul. This picture is at the macro level of the creation as well as at the micro level of the individual creature that forms its unit. The creatures referred in this verse are the living beings that inhabited the planet earth—i.e. the 2-legged creatures like the man and a whole variety of birds, and the 4-legged creatures such as the animals.

It is pertinent to note why birds have two legs—it is because they display more nearness to Brahm than their 4-legged brethren who cannot fly or even their 2-legged compatriots such as the man who too cannot fly, simply because Brahm had entered the first forms of creation consisting of both the 2-legged and the 4-legged creatures in the form of a 'bird'. It must be noted here that this 'bird' is the Atma, the pure conscious 'self' of the creature. When the creature dies, this 'bird' flies out of its body-like cage.

When the bird has not entered the cave, it can be identified as a particular type of bird such as a falcon, a kite, an eagle etc. But when it enters the cave, its independent verification is impossible as it simply vanishes in the dark recesses of the cave. Similarly, Brahm can be identified as the independent elementary units of creation such as the sky, wind, fire, water and earth, but when that Brahm takes up residence in the body of a creature as the Purush subtly residing in the body of the

living being, it becomes difficult to independently verify and classify it. In this case, Brahm is identified with the body that it has assumed.

The birds can fly and go anywhere they like; the birds live freely in the sky and spend most of their time flying from place to place unhindered. No geographical boundaries exist for them. This is also the case for Brahm— Brahm lives in the space of the cosmos, he can go anywhere he likes, and he can rest in any place he likes just like the bird which can alight upon any tree or any other place where it likes to take rest. In other words, the bird has been used as a symbol for Brahm to highlight the fact that Brahm is the only entity that has the ability to 'rise above the ground', which is a way of saying that Brahm can be beyond the reach of ordinary mortals even as the flying bird is beyond the catch of either the man or the animal, and at the same time this Brahm is present as one of them and lives amongst them just like the bird does.

Further, since the Atma is a personification of Brahm, it also possesses the ability to go wherever it likes like the bird, to lift itself above the mundane and the mortal world symbolised by the flying of the bird.]

19. This Madhu Vidya was preached to Ashwini Kumars by Dadhyang Atharvan. The wise and enlightened seer told them—'In order to enlighten the creature with a gross body about its primary pristine nature and its fundamental form, the supreme Brahm, called the Purush, became (or reverted back into) the primary elements of creation (such as the sky, wind, fire, water and earth)¹.

Therefore, though that mystical and enigmatic supreme transcendental entity (Brahm) is uniformly one, absolutely immutable and indivisible, it nevertheless appears in different shapes and forms having different contours, colours, shapes and sizes due to the illusionary and deceptive effect caused by ignorance about its real and truthful essence, about its real and truthful form and nature. This ignorance is called 'Maya'².

The body of a creature is like a chariot³, and the organs of this body, numbering ten⁴, are its horses. There are uncountable number of creatures and equally uncountable number of their varieties. Therefore, these symbolic horses can be thousands and endless in number.

That 'Brahm' (described in this Brahmin) is without a precedent, a cause or reason, has no work to do (i.e. it does not do anything; it is indifferent and neutral towards everything mundane), is without an inside and an outside (i.e. it is uniform and universal, being one indivisible whole which is the same inside as well as outside), is invisible and incomprehensible by any external means, or measureable by any known yardstick.

The Atma, which enjoys or experiences or witnesses or perceives everything in this existence, is an embodiment or personification of that all-pervading and omnipresent macrocosmic sublime Brahm in its microcosmic and subtle form. This is the essence and fundamental principle of all the preaching of the Upanishads (19).

[Note--¹That is, these primary and fundamental elements of creation from which the creature's gross body was created exist in this visible creation in their primary forms such as sky, wind, fire, water and earth alongside their evolved form in the guise of the gross body of the creature to

remind the latter about his origin. The simplest way to understand this phenomenon is to see how earth is moulded by the potter into various shapes and sizes of mud pots and pitchers. The same earth is now known and recognised by different names, but fundamentally all the pots and pans and pitchers are nothing but earth. Air, water and space have no forms of their own. They take the form of the vessel which contains them. For example, water takes the form of the tumbler or the kettle or the cup or any other pot into which it is poured. If the walls of this vessel is coloured, the water appears to be similarly coloured when observed from the outside, but actually the water neither has a shape nor any colour. Again, the air inside the body of a pot and the air present outside of it is the same. Though air is not physically visible like water, but it is nevertheless present in creation, and there is no denying of this fact. So, this is how Brahm is.

Likewise, the humblest of creatures and the most exalted ones are fundamentally the same; they have the same Atma in them; they are all revelations of Brahm who lives in their bodies as their Atma. The very purpose of letting these things be as they are in this world is to constantly remind the creature about his heritage and origin, but only a few wise ones pick up the subtle signal, while the rest ignore these obvious signs out of their ignorance and delusions. This is called 'Maya' or being deluded and being ignorant of the reality and the truth. The term Maya is described below in detail.

The Supreme Being known as Brahm or Purush assumes the form of the body into which it has entered. For example, the air inside a pot assumes the shape of the pot; the sky inside the pot also becomes shaped like the pot; the water is the best and obvious visible example of this fact because it takes the shape of the mud pot in which it is kept; the fire of the fire pit also likewise assumes the shape of the pit such as being rectangle, a square etc., and of course the earth has already taken up the shape of the mud pot. But all these shapes do not alter the basic form of any of these entities—they are without any fixed form and take the shape in which they are present. Similarly, Brahm lives in the given body as the Atma in a subtle plane, and is recognised as the Purush as identified by the body that it assumes.

²*Maya* is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a 'mother or someone who creates', while the other half refers to the notion of doubt, of either this or that. The word 'Ma' also means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of'. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation which harbours or creates uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the 'mother of all confusions and perplexities'. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define all these phenomena. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance based, illusionary, imposter, deceitful, invisible and super-natural; all that which has no reality or substance; all that is hollow. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme

transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions

Maya has three basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called *Trigunmayi*, i.e. one which has the three Gunas or qualities. These three Gunas or qualities are— Sata, Raja and Tama. 'Sata' is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvement leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raja' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tama' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used as a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tama' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These *three qualities* together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sata' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tama' which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

When a man understands any 'Truth' after rigorously examining the 'truthfulness' of that truth, when he has established the veracity of facts, he believes in it more firmly and more convincingly. No matter what other people tell him about the truth being not the correct or the whole truth, he would not listen to them, simply because he has verified the facts for himself, he has witnessed the truth himself, he has logically eliminated all falsehoods to deduce that what he knows is the 'truthful Truth'. His Truth is based on rigid and solid foundation; he is unwavering and steady in it. If he is steadfast and convinced in his knowledge, no matter how much ignorance and delusions (Maya) try to push him away from the absolute 'Truth', he will remain steadfast and unwavering in it. There will be no doubts and confusions in his mind.

The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the truth that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. This is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality'. Maya nevertheless hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the 'Nirgun Brahm' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time assuming the glorious attributes of Brahm itself. So ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lent it its own colour and hue to it. As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.

The *eight forms that Maya takes*--The eight forms of Maya are the delusion and ignorance creating powers of Brahm without which the creation would neither be conceived nor expanded, because if everyone becomes aware of the reality, if everyone realises that everything is

perishable and immaterial, that whatever is seen and enjoyed are like a mirage seen in a desert, then all would renounce the world, there would be no marriages and procreation, there would be no creation of wealth and strife and tension to protect this wealth, there would be no desire to have dominance over others, for all are equal and one in the eyes of Brahm and they have the same Atma which prevails uniformly in the breadth and length of the creation. So Brahm uses Maya as a tool to maintain a veil of ignorance and delusions to carry forward his game plan, until the time he decides that he had had enough of it and then initiates the folding-up process of concluding this creation for good, or for at least that time when he decides to roll the carpet once again.

Now, these eight forms that Maya takes are the following—the five elements forming the basic building blocks of the gross creation (i.e. the elements of earth, water, fire, air and space which form the gross body of all the living creatures) + mind + intellect (together called the subtle body of the creature) + Ahankar (the ego, pride and arrogance that the creature possesses, leading to the notion of ‘I’, ‘me’, or ‘mine’ = eight entities.

Actually, a wise man understands that whatever exists in whatever form is nothing but one or the other form of the same universal entity known as Brahm. To take an example, a scientist knows that water in whatever form and colour and shape consists of the same two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen. Further, he also realises that everything is made of atoms and their basic structure consists of sub-atomic particles such as electron, proton, neutron etc. With this erudition and view point, a wise man sees these basic ingredients in all things that he observes around him, because everything is made up of atoms and molecules. But an ordinary man talks of the water of the ocean, of the well, of the drain and of the river etc. He talks of gold, of silver, of wood or of iron, not realising that all consist of the same building block called the ‘Atom’. Similarly, due to ignorance a man is deluded into thinking that the gross world that he sees is has an independent existence and it is real. He forgets to analyse its fundamental ingredient which is the pure consciousness that is making it alive. The five elements that are used to make up this world are all perishable and gross, and they are the creation of the mind. The mind itself is perishable because it dies with the body. Then, what is the reason why a man has so much ego and pride in himself and his abilities? It is Maya. It is his ignorance that has held him by his collars, as it were. He forgets that if his true self is imperishable, then how come he dies; if his true self is enlightened and wise, then why he suffers from so much misery and disillusionment; if his true self is eternal, then why does he have to take a birth and then die? A wise man then begins to ponder why does he treat those entities which are transient, mortal and the cause of so much misery and consternations and confusions as true; why does he not realise that the truth is imperishable and eternal and universal? This is due to the influence of delusions and ignorance created by Maya. This is how Maya keeps everyone trapped under its net.]

Maya has *three names*—viz. (a) Maha Maya—or the great powers exhibited by Brahm at the cosmic level. This Maya is the progenitor of all other types of Mayas which keep the individual creature trapped in their net. The Maha Maya is the virtual mistress of all the delusions and misconceptions and their attendant ignorance that keep all the creatures of this creation enthralled by their deceptive charm. (b) Yog Maya—this is the stupendous magical powers created by the union of the supreme

authority of creation known as Brahm, and the mystical and esoteric powers that delusions and hallucinations can create for the creature. (c) Maya Shakti—this is the ‘shakti’ or power and authority displayed by Maya in association with Brahm from whom it acquires its stupendous energy and powers.

‘Yog Maya’ can be further understood as follows-- The word ‘Yogmaya’ has two parts, viz.-Yog and Maya. Yoga means meditation and contemplation, while Maya refers to the cosmic energy and delusions created by the Lord at the time of creation. ‘Yog’ also means union or conjunction or fusion of two entities. Therefore, Yogmaya refers to the fusion of the cosmic energy with the delusion-creating powers of the supreme Brahm when he did decide to start the process of creation. The illusion created by him removed the distinction between the truth and falsehood so much so that both appeared the same and became interchangeable. That is why, what appears true on the surface is actually false, and vice versa. But to enable this to happen, Brahm had to meditate and focus his attention to ignite that inherent but latent energy that is an integral part of creation. In other words, he had to do Tapa, which is another form of Yoga. The resultant stupendous forces of Nature that were unleashed by Brahm’s meditation led to the chain of events that culminated in the revelation of the cosmos as it is known today. This magnificent event or the primary force that set this chain in motion has been conceptualized by the Purans as a deity known as ‘Yogmaya’; she has been depicted by them as the female counterpart of the maverick Lord of creation, who has been personified as the Viraat Purush. In the case of Lord Ram, who is that Viraat Purush also known as Vishnu, that Yogmaya is represented by Sita. The other connotation of ‘union’ implies that this Yogmaya establishes a link between the ignorant and deluded creature, and the unadulterated, supreme and ultimate Truth represented by the Lord. The word also refers to the magical and mystical powers displayed by mystics and ascetics, which they have acquired by the virtue of their meditation and contemplation.

We can understand this phenomenon of how the Maya of the Lord has created this vast canvas of creation with a simple example. A painter wishes to paint a landscape. He starts with a pure white canvas, and using his imagination and powers to visualise a magnificently beautiful scene, he starts painting with numerous primary colours and then goes on mixing these colours to produce umpteen numbers of colours of varying hues and shades. Besides the colour, he continuously adds a stroke here and a brush there as he tries to reveal on the lifeless canvas the conception of life as he visualises in his mind; he is never satisfied with his work and goes on and on endlessly adding colours and lines to the canvas. The result is most astounding and stupendous to behold. But still the painter is not satisfied; so the net result is that the canvas gets being redone over and over again, and layers after layers of lines that had been made and erased, of paints that had been painted over numerous times, of shapes and figures that had been visualised, rejected and reconceived and placed on the canvas only to make the painter uneasy about them. In short, the basic canvas that was pristine pure at the beginning has been reduced to scrap! The painter then keeps it aside or if totally disgusted with it, he may throw it in the garbage bin.

This all but sums up how the supreme Lord creates, develops and concludes the creation. The clean white canvas represents the Satwic qualities with which the Atma starts out. The painter is the supreme Lord or Brahm, the landscape he imagines is equivalent to Maya because it

has no actual existence but is imagined by him, and he is so skilled a painter that once the painting is ready, the scene that is depicted on the canvas appears to be very real and live, creating an illusion of the grandeur of the actual thing; this is a deception because the painter has used his imagination as the subject of the painting, but an ignorant man who is not aware of this fact would believe that the painting has been inspired by some actual landscape that the painter must have seen somewhere. As a matter of fact, it might also happen that the scene does actually exist, but the painter has added touches of his own imagination to add vibrancy and colour to the scene about which the observer is unaware. The scene and the 3-dimensional landscape is equivalent to the creation and the colourful Nature. The paint and the primary colours used by the Lord during the process of creation to make it vibrant and lively are the different Gunas (virtues, qualities and characteristics), the various Vasanas (desires and passions) and Vrittis (inherent tendencies and inclinations of a creature; his nature and temperaments) as well as the Tattwas (elements) which are fundamental to and inseparable from creation. The innumerable varieties of shades of characters, virtues and qualities that are present in the creature represent these myriad colours that the creator uses to paint his creation. Until at last the Lord stands back and is stumped at the Frankenstein Monster that he has unleashed! Then he decides to call it quits, and this is equivalent to annihilation of the creation. But as a painter he cannot sit quiet; and so starts the process once all over again!

Supposing the painter did not add his own name to the painting, or he had added a pseudonym. Then in such a case, there would be conjectures about his identity, leading to so many theories and debates. Then some wise man would look up the archives and dig up some evidence about who he was. This is exactly what happens here in the case of creation—no one knows for sure who that creator is, what is his name, etc. Some wise and enlightened man came to unearth the truth about him, and he tried to tell others in the words he could muster. This is how the great maverick Lord has been known and recognised by us. When his glories are sung, it is actually praising the great painter for his skills and the matchless heritage that he has created for us to cherish and behold.

Mantriko-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes Maya in substantial detail. In its verse no.5 it says that *Maya has three basic colours*—viz. ‘white’, ‘red’ or ‘dark’, and the various shades in between. These three colours represent the three basic qualities, called Gunas, present in all the creatures and are only symbolic of the innumerable variations in which the basic qualities can combine to produce countless number of characteristics and virtues and behaviours that give individuality and specific characteristics to millions and millions of creatures. These are simply metaphors only meant to explain and help visualise certain things, and therefore should not be taken too literally as meaning that dark skinned people are sinful and pervert and worthy of condemnation, or that fair skinned ones are all righteous and noble, for just the opposite is witnessed daily in our lives.

Even as an offspring gets the colour of the skin of the race to which it belongs, the inherent characters of all creatures are inherited from their mother, and this mother is Maya. The white colour stands for the best category of qualities called Sata Guna, the red colour stands for the second and medium quality called Raja, and the dark colour stands for the meanest quality called Tama. The word Tam itself means ‘dark’ and it stands for the worst type of qualities leading to sinful and pervert

nature in a man which makes his life hellish; the word 'red' is a metaphor for anger, vehemence, vengeance, agitations, restlessness, short temper, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy and the other such negative worldly characteristics in a person; the colour 'white' stands for peace, tranquility, prosperity, happiness and wisdom, all of which are the characters of noble and gentlemanly persons.

Sage Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan', in its Lanka Kanda, canto 14, verse no.28-29 describes the relationship between Maya and Brahm, albeit in the context of Lord Ram. The concept of Maya affecting the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, especially Maitrayanyu Upanishad, cantos 2-4 of the Sam Veda tradition, an English version of which by this humble author has been published separately in this series.

³The Atma resides inside the body of a creature which is treated as a *chariot*. The Atma is the passenger or the boss who rides in this chariot, but the chariot representing the body is physically driven forward not by the Atma but by the horses which represent the various organs of the body. Even as the charioteer who does not control these horses can lead the chariot towards an accident, the Atma which does not control the various sense organs ruins itself.

⁴The ten organs of the body representing the *horses* of the chariot are the following —five organs of perception such as the ear, nose, eye, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals. These 'horses', if properly yoked and reined in by the charioteer, can take the chariot (body) as well as the charioteer (Atma) to the proper destination, but if they are allowed to do what they want, they would canter away in different directions, pulling the chariot apart and killing its occupants. This would create complete chaos and destruction. When this analogy of the chariot and the horse is applied to the creature's body and its sense organs, it becomes amply clear that if the organs are not properly controlled, the creature would lead himself to his own ruin.

The charioteer Atma (representing Brahm) sits quietly in the chariot represented by the body of the creature. He does not physically move in his seat on the chariot and neither does he actually pull the chariot himself, but by simply holding the rein which in turn controls the horses he can control the whole chariot.

Occasionally if the horses still are not controlled by the reins, the charioteer, here represented by the Atma or Brahm, has to use the whip once in a while to control them which means that he has to forcefully control these organs by using coercive methods. While the chariot is moving, the horses are the important factors. The more skilled is the charioteer and the more disciplined the horses, the more easily and hassle free is the journey of the chariot. But the moment the charioteer becomes lax and inattentive and allows the horses to do what they want, the chariot begins to rock and roll from side to side; it becomes a death-trap. It becomes therefore difficult for the creature to reach its destination if the organs are not put under tight leash of the Atma representing Brahm.]

Canto 2 Brahmin 6

1-3 Now, the chain of disciples and their teachers or Gurus who preached 'Madhu Vidya' is being enumerated here. It starts at the bottom, i.e. at the last line of disciples, and progressively goes up till it reaches the self-produced Brahma, the creator of the rest of the world and the one who created the Vedas and the body of knowledge itself, and who is the embodiment of all this knowledge that was ever created by Brahm, the Supreme Being. This chain consisting of disciples and Gurus symbolises the encyclopedic metaphysical knowledge which is personified in the form of these persons. Therefore, the chain starts from them and ends with the patriarch of creation, Brahma, himself.

The list is as follows:- (1) Pautimashya received this Madhu Vidya from his teacher Gaupvan; (2) Gaupvan from Pautimashya; (3) Pautimashya from Gaupvan once again; (4) Gaupvan from Kaushik; (5) Kaushik from Kaundinya; (6) Kaundinya from Shandilya; (7) Shandilya from Kaushik and Gautam; (8) Gautam from Aagniveshya; (9) Aagniveshya from Shandilya and Aanvhimlaat; (10) Aanvhimlaat from (another sage or seer by the same name) Aanvhimlaat; (11) Aanvhimlaat from (a third sage or seer by the same name) Aanvhimlaat; (12) Aanvhimlaat (this third sage or seer) from Gautam; (13) Gautam from Saitav and Prachinyogya; (14) the latter two from Parasharya; (15) Parasharya from Bharadwaj; (16) Bharadwaj from (another sage named) Bharadwaj and Gautam; (17) Gautam from Bharadwaj; (18) Bharadwaj from Parasharya; (19) Parasharya from Baijvapayan; (20) Baijvapayan from Kaushikaayani; (21) Kaushikaayani from Ghrith Kaushik; (22) Ghrith Kaushik from Parasharyaayan; (23) the latter from Parasharya; (24) Parasharya from Jatukaranya; (25) Jatukarnya from Aasuraayan and Yaaskmuni; (26) Aasuraayan from Traivani; (27) Traivani from Aupjandhani; (28) Aupjandhani from Aasuri; (29) Aasuri from Bharadwaj; (30) Bharadwaj from Aatreya; (31) Aatreya from Maanti; (32) Maanti from Gautam; (33) Gautam from Vaatsya; (34) Vaatsya from Shandilya; (35) Shandilya from Kaishorya Kaapya; (36) Kaishorya Kaapya from Kumar Haarit; (37) Kumar Haarith from Gaalav; (38) Gaalav from Vidharvi Kaundinya; (39) Vidharvi Kaundinya from Vatsanpat Baabhrav; (40) the latter from Panthaasaubhar; (42) Panthaasaubhar from Ayaasya Angiras; (43) Ayaasya Angiras from Abhuti Twaashtra; (43) Abhuti Twaashtra from Vishwaroop Twaashtra; (44) Vishwaroop Twaashtra from Ashwini Kumars; (45) Ashwini Kumars from Dadhyang Atharvan (see 2/5/16-18 of this Upanishad); (47) Dadhyang Atharvan from Atharva Deo (Atharva Veda personified, or a sage who was an expert in this Veda); Atharva Dev from Mritu Praadwansan; (48) the latter from Pradwansan; (49) Pradwansan from Ekarshi; (50) Ekarshi from Viprachitti; (51) Viprachitti from Vyasti; (52) Vyasti from Sanaaru; (53) Sanaaru from Sanaatan; (54) Sanaatan from Sanag; (55) Sanag from Parmeshthi (the Viraat Purush; Vishnu); and (56) finally Parmeshthi had received this magnificent and divine knowledge from the self-produced Brahma, the creator. We bow most reverentially to the great preacher Brahma! (1-3)

[Note--We note that many names in this list have been repeated more than once, and in many cases it appears that two sages preached one another in turn (serial no. 1-3; 8-12 etc.). The repetition of names might be because there were often two or more sages with the same name, or

when the chosen disciple had adopted the name of his Guru as his title or surname (serial no. 10-11 and 16). Further, one sage has preached to a particular sage and again preached to another sage at a different point of time, e.g. sages Kaushik, Gautam and Bharadwaj. All these sages lived either at a single place in a cluster of hermitages and used to gather at a community meeting point of sages and seers to discuss and debate upon some metaphysical points. All of them used to travel long distances to some other place to discuss the matter with a far-away sage who would be invited to come and preach at the place from where the sages had come from, much like the exchange of scholars and professors in modern day universities and colleges. So there should be no confusion as to why there appears to be an overlapping of names often in this Brahmin. It should be noted that this Brahmin is repeated verbatim in canto 4, Brahmin 6 also.]

Canto 3 Brahmin 1

[The legendary king Janak, the wisest and the most enlightened king of his time who happened to be the father-in-law of Lord Ram, once organised a big horse sacrifice, called the ‘Ashamedh Yagya’, in which erudite and scholarly sages and seers from the regions known as Kuru and Panchal were invited to participate. On the sidelines of the main sacrificial rituals, religious discussions and debates on metaphysical and theological topics were held. Janak had also invited the great sage Yagyavalkya (who had taught the Madhu Vidya in canto 2, Brahmin 4 and 5) on that occasion. The highlight of this canto is the great theological and metaphysical discussions between Yagyavalkya and other great sages and seers who had dared to challenge him for a debate in which ultimately Yagyavalkya won. It was a women hermitress named Gargi who proclaimed him to be the wisest of them all, but another sage named Shakalya Vidagdha, who was stubborn and proud of his knowledge, was instigated by others to dare Yagyavalkya and take him head on. Their debate resulted in Yagyavalkya cursing him that his head would fall down when he went on asking fruitless questions which had no answer, just to humiliate Yagyavalkya. This canto has nine Brahmins, and is based on logical deduction of great metaphysical truths.]

1. King Janak, known as Videha (literally a person who is so enlightened that he is unaware of the presence of his gross body while he lives like an ordinary man and interacts with the world in a normal way; he remains engrossed in meditating upon his own pure self called the Atma which is pure consciousness) organised a religious festival of fire sacrifice entailing huge donations. Such sacrifices were usually called ‘Ashwamedh’, or the Horse Sacrifice. In that sacrifice, great scholars of different places were called. Among those invited were the ones from Panchal and Kuru regions. The king wished to know who was the most enlightened, scholarly, learned, sagacious, erudite and wise amongst them. For this he got one thousand cows of his royal cowshed prepared for donation by getting their horns covered with gold plating weighing

approximately 100 grams each (i.e. each horn had 50 gram worth of gold so that each cow had 100 grams of gold foil on its horns) (1).

[Note--These cows with gold-plated horns were set aside as prize for the one who wins the debates in the festival.]

2. The king said to those great Brahmins— ‘Oh the revered ones! Anyone of you who is the most enlightened about Brahm would get these cows as a reward’.

None of the assembled Brahmins had the guts to stand up and face the challenge. At that point, the great sage Yagyavalkya said to his Brahmachari disciple named Samsrawa, ‘Oh gentle Samsrawa! Herd away all these cows to our hermitage on my behalf’.

At this, all the other Brahmins became very angry, jealous and peeved¹.

They asked how has this man deemed himself to be more scholarly, erudite and expert on the subject of Brahm unilaterally, without even having an opportunity to prove himself? So the king’s chief priest of that fire sacrifice, called the Hota, named Ashwal, asked Yagyavalkya, ‘Oh sage! Are you sure that you are the most erudite, learned, scholarly and wisest in the knowledge of Brahm in this assembly?’

Sage Yagyavalkya replied sarcastically, ‘I bow before those who have knowledge of Brahm. Presently, I only have the desire to have the cows!’

Determined to find out the truth or test him and his knowledge as well as his integrity, Ashwal, the Hota, asked Yagyavalkya as follows— (2).

[Note--¹This shows the mental caliber of these supposedly wise sages who should have treated gold and the cows as of no consequence in this perishable and mortal world. They were supposed to be well versed in the scriptures which exhorts its followers not to hanker after material wealth in this world. The fact that they had gathered there eying fame and material benefit is proved by the fact that they just could not digest the fact that Yagyavalkya, who was a renowned sage of his time, should take away these gold-horned cows unchallenged. It should be noted in this canto that none of the sages who questioned Yagyavalkya in the following Brahmins are well known, except Gargi, but she immediately declared that the sage was indeed the greatest amongst them. But the others had their own burden of ego and pride that would prevent them from accepting the inevitable. Further, this episode shows that having textual knowledge of the scriptures is one thing and actually understanding what their intent is and their purpose is another, and more difficult is their implementation in practical life.]

3. ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! When this entire creation is mortal and subject to death and decay, when it is subjugated by death and is perishable, how is that the chief patron of the fire sacrifice, called the Yajmaan on behalf of whom the rituals are done, can conquer death and break free from its shackles?’

Sage Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The Hota Ritwik¹, the priest who performs the fire sacrifice by offering oblation to the sacred fire to the accompaniment of incantation of the sacred hymns, represents the ‘Vak’

and 'Agni', or the magnificent powers of the faculty of speech and its inherent energy represented by the fire element personified. Empowered with their majestic potentials, he is able to cross over the hurdle created by death (i.e. he can transcend death, he can vanquish death, he can triumph over death, he can become immortal and imperishable). That is equivalent to obtaining 'Mukti'² (i.e. liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) and even the supreme form of Mukti (i.e. becoming one with the supreme transcendental Brahm) (3).

[Note--¹The *Hota Ritwik* is a personification of the two fundamental elements of a fire sacrifice— 'speech' or the faculty that empowers one to chant the sacred Vedic hymns, and 'fire' in the form of enlightenment, wisdom and mystical powers that such sacrifices and chanting of hymns bestows upon him. Speech is a form of sound, which is one of the subtlest elements of creation and considered to be the nearest analogue of Brahm; it is the first tangible manifestation of Brahm. The fire element of the cosmos not only represents energy of that supreme Brahm, but also has the capacity to burn or purify everything which it comes in contact with; in this case it means burning all the sins of the patron on behalf of whom the sacrifice is being performed. Once the sins are burnt, the patron is freed from their shackling effects. He obtains 'Mukti', or liberation and deliverance.

Performance of fire sacrifices were the main means of attaining salvation during ancient Vedic age. However, only a very few people actually understood their metaphysical and spiritual import; these sacrifices were reduced to mere physical rituals. The main purpose of the Upanishads was to bring to the fore their hidden meaning and interpret these rituals so that even a common man who cannot afford such sacrifices involving huge expenses can realise that salvation is not just the right of either Brahmins or rich patrons who could afford such expensive exercises. It is important here to understand the symbolism of the fire sacrifice so that the subtle meaning can be easily grasped.

The Hota chanted Mantras using his faculty of speech, the offering to the Gods were made to the sacred fire which burnt everything put into it, and it was deemed that this exercise can give liberation and deliverance to the patron. This is because it was expected that after one performance, the patron as well as others who attended it would understand the metaphysical significance of the exercise so that they can benefit from it. The Hota represents the faculty of speech (because he chants Mantras) where the vital Pran (the life-giving breath) and the fire element have their symbolic residence. The Hota chants Mantras not for himself but for the benefit of the patron, and the offerings to the Gods are also done by him not for himself but for the patron. Earlier in Canto 1, Brahmin 3 it has been pointed out that this Pran residing in the form of breath was able to take other organs across the fear of death because it was 'selfless' as compared to others.

So the Hota's chanting takes the patron across death because the chanting of Mantras is done by him selflessly. The subtle message is that this faculty which is present in all men in equal intensity should be used selflessly for the benefit of other living beings. Chanting of Mantras require control over breath, symbolising the beneficial effects of doing Pranayam which is a meditative breath control exercise. The fire has the unique ability to purify everything put in it symbolising the fact that the inherent fire element present inside the body and especially the faculty of speech should be used to burn all Vasanas and Vrittis, i.e. all inherent

worldly desires, passions, yearnings, greed etc. along with the different worldly tendencies and temperaments that yank the creature's pure Atma away from purity and forces it to get bogged down in the swampy world of material things, should be willfully burned in the fire of renunciation if one wishes to attain Mukti, which literally means liberation from bondages.

If one successfully does this spiritual symbolic fire sacrifice, it is only then that he should expect any Mukti; otherwise it would be reduced to a mere mechanical exercise done repeatedly, but to no avail.

The fire sacrifice itself is a symbolic burning of all the sins and their negative effects which are literally and virtually causing the spiritual death of the patron. So to treat the Hota Ritwik as an embodiment of the sound and fire element—because he chants the hymns of the Vedas and he offers oblations to the sacred fire—and using them to honour Brahm by always saying whatever is the truth and by burning one's sins in the fire of self control and doing Tapa (austerity, penance, sufferance and being steadfast in keeping rigid righteous vows), is tantamount to doing a symbolic supreme sacrifice.

Symbolically therefore, the chief patron offers his 'Ahankar' (ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness) represented by his 'fiery speech' to the sacred fire as a sacrificial offering and burns his false self pride to become humble and submissive to the supreme Lord and his many manifestations in this world.

In short, Yagyavalkya emphasised the point that the chief patron can use his faculty of speech to praise the supreme Lord of creation instead of frittering away its energy in worldly pursuits. If he does so, he would be deemed to have overcome the barrier created by death, because death happens to the gross body and not to the elements such as the fire element and the sound element, both of which are eternal and infinite.

This is how the patron and anyone who participated in these fire sacrifices got to overcome the fear of death.

²*Mukti* means liberation and deliverance. To rise above mundane worldly considerations of organizing a fire sacrifice and attending it merely as a means of gaining popularity and fame as a religious man and a big donor, and instead, having a holistic and enlightened view of the entire exercise of the fire sacrifice as a steeping stone for spiritual upliftment and creating a religious ambience that is conducive to it, especially when it gives one an excellent opportunity to hear and get the benefit of communion of great sages and seers who assemble at one place and give religious discourses during such sacrifices, is the main reason why such fire sacrifices have the potential of providing great chance of attaining what is known as 'Mukti' which can be defined as freedom from ignorance and delusions about spiritual matters and realising the ultimate Truth in this creation. A wise person is thus able to break the formidable shackle of ignorance which ties down a person's Atma to an endless cycle of birth and death. He is able to get enlightened about his true self as well as the fact that the external world, which he had been pursuing in search of peace and happiness till now, is not going to provide them to him. Once enlightenment dawns upon his mind as a result of attending such religious festivals where sages and seers give their expert advice and guidance, he can expect the ultimate Mukti, or the 'great Mukti' which is the final emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature when it merges itself with the primary source of all happiness and bliss called the Brahm. This self-realisation about one's own true self as well as the falsehood of the world is made possible by

such fire sacrifices because of the communion with the great souls who assemble there, giving the spiritual seeker a unique opportunity to hear them and remove his existing doubts on any spiritual matter.

Thus, a fire sacrifice can be a stepping stone for conquering death in the sense that one becomes enlightened about the falsehood of the gross world, about the perishable nature of the body and the fact that the body is not the true self but it is the Atma which is imperishable and eternal. This realisation naturally removes the basic cause of fear of death—once the man knows that his Atma would never die and what he feared from death was actually his body's death, but fortunately that body is not his true self, he becomes fearless. In other words, he has conquered death; he has vanquished death; he has broken free from the bondage created by an imaginary fear of death.]

4. Ashwal said, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! The day and night extend over all periods of time, the past, the present and the future; they are relevant in all phases of life; they are so extensive, omnipresent, all-pervading and widespread that no corner of creation escapes them. [In other word, all corners and directions of the world witness the day and the night in an endless cycle.] Say then how can the chief patron of the fire sacrifice, called the Yajmaan on whose behalf the fire sacrifice is being done, is liberated from the limitations imposed by the day and the night; how can he transcend them; how is it possible that he can live at a plane where the day and the night have no reach? [That is, if it is said that a person who does a fire sacrifice obtains the heaven where there is no day and no night, and since it is obvious that all corners of the creation are subject to a day and a night, then how do you compromise with this dilemma; how do you reconcile this paradox?]'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'By the medium of the Adhwaryu Ritwik and the 'eye' representing the sun. The Adhwaryu Ritwik priest is like the symbolic 'eye' of the fire sacrifice¹. Hence, that symbolic eye is like the Aditya (or the Sun God) for the Yajmaan (the chief patron). This metaphysical view of the fire sacrifice enables the Yajmaan (the chief patron) to be freed from the over-bearing influence of the day as well as the night². This is 'Mukti', and even the supreme form of Mukti³ (4).

[Note--¹The *Adhwaryu Ritwik* is the priest who recites the hymns of the Yajur Veda during the sacrificial fire. He is like the 'eye' of the patron on whose behalf the fire sacrifice is being done because the Adhwaryu actually sees the sacred fire burning brightly and dazzling directly in front while making the offerings to it. The priest is hired by the patron for doing the sacred rituals on his behalf, and so it is expected that the priest is selfless in his exercises. So when he sees the burning fire through his eyes it is a symbolic seeing on the behalf of his patron who is paying him for it.

It is obvious that where there is the light of fire, darkness is dispelled. Even though there may be the darkness of the night in the surrounding area, but where the fire is burning fiercely there is constant light. The pupil of the eye is said to be the symbolic abode of the Sun God because it is through the eye that not only the priest sees the sacrificial holy fire and its magnificent glory in the form of its bright light, but this eye also enables even an ordinary man to see the world at large. It is through the eye that the world is illuminated for an ordinary viewer as much as is the sacred fire burning in the sacrificial pit as far as

the Adhwaryu is concerned. This priest is concentrated on the fire; he sees nothing else but the fire. So when he even closes his eye for a moment, he can still visualise the brightly burning fire in his mind with the closed lids of the eye. Even when his eyelids are closed, he can still see some kind of defused light illuminating his field of vision. For all practical purposes, darkness symbolising night does not exist near a burning fire, thereby creating a virtual day-like situation.

Refer Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 19 and Brahmin 6, verse no. 2 in this context.

²This is the symbolism here—when the wise patron realises that the eye representing the Sun God permanently present with him, there cannot be any darkness anywhere. Even as the pupil of the eye harbours the Sun while at the same time being surrounded by the black portion of the eye representing the night and the white portion representing the day existing simultaneously around it, both not in anyway affecting the magnificent ability of the eye to see through the presence of the faculty of sight in the pupil where the Sun God resides, the Yajmaan (chief patron) also is symbolically able to rise above and transcend the mundane influences of the day and the night symbolically representing the good and the bad in this world respectively.

For a wise and enlightened patron, there is a ‘perpetual day’ representing wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation; there is no effect of darkness of night symbolising ignorance and delusions upon him. The Yajmaan does not have to suffer from the alternate phases of sorrows, suffering and pains represented by the darkness of the night and symbolised by the dark portion of the eye, and of happiness, joys and good fortunes represented by the light of the day symbolised by the white portion of the eye as long as he has the light of wisdom and enlightenment shining brightly inside him to show him the falsehood of both.

Further, there are other ways of interpreting this verse. The physical eye of the gross body that is used to see worldly things has a subtle and sublime counterpart as the eye of wisdom present in the subtle body of the man. The man sees this world where there are alternative phases of darkness (night) and light (day) symbolising sorrows and happiness respectively with his physical eyes, but when his inner eyes of wisdom and enlightenment are opened, there is no scope of darkness to ever worry him, or happiness exciting him. In other words, there is perpetual tranquility, equanimity and bliss of self-realisation in such a person. A person who understands the symbolic importance of seeing the light of the sacrificial fire burning radiantly—a fire that can burn everything in it and can illuminate the surrounding area, with his physical eyes—also realises the importance of opening his eyes of wisdom and enlightenment which would remove the darkness of ignorance and light his world with enlightenment.

Only the virtue of selflessness can take one across the fear of death as emphasised earlier in Canto 1, Brahmin 2. That is why only the Ritwik who offers the oblation to the sacred fire selflessly can benefit his patron. So, a wise man who sees all with a sense of equality, a sense which comes automatically when he realises that the Atma present in him is also present in all other living beings, is able to attain an exalted stature and get immense amount of respect and peace. He has no enemy and anything to fear from. His eye of wisdom would have told him that the world which he sees with the physical eye would die one day like the fire of the sacrifice, but more important than this mortal world and an

extinguishable fire is to attain the world of immortality and light the eternal fire of enlightenment.

³Only such wisdom can give him *Mukti*. Since it is a spiritual *Mukti* marked by enlightenment, wisdom and self-realisation, it is a higher form of *Mukti*, and is therefore called 'Ati *Mukti*' as opposed to that liberation which is limited to the freedom of the body from some kind of physical slavery of the organs vis-à-vis the material world created out of ignorance and delusions.

The day and night also represent the continuous cycle of birth and death respectively. Liberation or *Mukti* in this context means the final emancipation and salvation of the soul when it merges with its principles cosmic source known as the supreme transcendental Brahman from where the soul does not have to take birth again. The latter form of *Mukti* is also called 'Kaivalya *Mukti*', i.e. that *Mukti* which is the only one of its kind. It is indeed the Ati *Mukti*, the best form of *Mukti*.]

5. Ashwal asked once again, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! Everything falls/comes under the two phases of the moon—the dark phase and the bright phase. [The two phases of the moon together cover the entire month consisting of two halves of fifteen days each.] Since this covers all the phases of time in this world, nothing happens beyond it; no event can take place when either of the phases of the moon is not present. Say then how can a Yajmaan be freed from the various limitations imposed by the waning and waxing phase of the moon? [That is, it is believed that a wise and enlightened patron, who benefited from the fire sacrifice, reaches a stable state when he neither has to see bad days as represented by the waning phase of the moon as well as good day as represented by the waxing phase of the moon. It is believed that he is always uniform, steady, unwavering and calm as if no change has taken place in the moon. All his fame, good fortune, majesty, splendour, knowledge, etc. are supposed to be constantly shining like the full moon. Say how it is possible when the moon itself is waxing and waning?]

Saga Yagyavalkya replied, 'With the help of the Udgata Ritwik and the vital wind in the form of the Pran. The Udgata is said to be the 'life' of the fire sacrifice¹ (because he melodiously sings the hymns of the Sam Veda loudly, thereby rendering life, succulence, sweetness, attractiveness, charm, vigour and vitality to the otherwise boring and lackluster humdrum rituals of the fire sacrifice which seem to be meaningless for the rest of the participants, including the chief patron who might not be well versed in the rituals and understand the literal and spiritual meaning and significance of the hymns being sung during the process).

The Pran is the life of any living being, and the Pran is the vital wind force which enables the Udgata to sing the hymns articulately with a loud, soulful and melodious voice.

Therefore, the Udgata Ritwik, the Pran and the Vayu (wind element) are complementary to each other. This enlightened view is not only a provider of *Mukti* but even the superior form of *Mukti*, called the 'Ati *Mukti*' (5).

[Note--¹The *Udgata Ritwik* is the priest who sings the melodious hymns of the Sam Veda. Since the singing of these hymns needs special expertise and singing skills entailing the coordination of the mind and heart, as well as of the faculty of speech and breath control, it is deemed

that the priest who sings these hymns is the life and soul of the fire sacrifice. The Udgata therefore symbolically represents the Pran of the fire sacrifice.

From the metaphysical perspective, the Udgata represents the glory of the Pran, the vital wind and its characteristic vigour and vitality that are needed in successful completion of any endeavour. This is because to sing melodiously he uses his vital chief Pran located in the throat (i.e. the breath). He also has to sing with his heart and soul completely involved in the singing; he has to concentrate upon what he is singing so as not to confuse the sacred hymns and their especial intonations. The Moon God has his abode in the Mana or the mind and heart (verse no 6 below), and therefore when the priest sings with devotion and sincerity, the Moon God is pleased. The Pran has the water element as its abode of which the moon is a visible, radiant form (canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no.13). The sanctified liquid called Som which is drunk during such sacrifices is said to be stored in the moon by the Gods. This liquid is like the elixir of life and is therefore synonymous with Pran. Hence we deduce that Moon is the patron God of the Pran as well as the Mana (mind and heart). Therefore, a man who respects the Pran and the Mana is showing his respects to the Moon God who would be kind to him and grant him freedom from having to follow certain religious duties according to the lunar calendar.

When a wise man realises the importance of Pran and the other vital winds in relation to his spiritual pursuit, he endeavours to establish a harmonious relationship between them and use them judiciously to pursue a noble path of righteousness and auspiciousness instead of pursuing worldly deeds. Having successfully controlled his Pran and other vital winds, he would remain steady and unwavering in his thoughts and emotions which is a symbolic way of saying that he would have overcome the changing phases of the moon, because the Moon God controls these aspects of a man's personality. For such a wise man, it does not matter which phase of the moon it is to decide whether or not to do the symbolic fire sacrifice involving the control of his Pran and other vital winds known as Vayu.

Even as offerings are made into the sacred fire during the formal sacrificial ritual, a wise and self-realised man offers his Mana into the symbolic sacrifice that he does by controlling his vital winds by the means of various meditative practices. Since he can do them anytime without having to wait for a particular auspicious date and time according to the sanctioned procedure based on the lunar cycle, he has literally freed himself from formalities and rituals. Instead, he is deemed to have understood the essence of singing the Udgith during the formal sacrifice. He has understood that soulful prayers can be offered to the supreme Lord God anytime of the day or night, and no formalities need to be complied with, no elaborate exercises need be done for this purpose. This enlightened view lifts the patron from being merely an ordinary mortal doing the fire sacrifice just to achieve some worldly gain and fame, but to an enlightened man who does the fire sacrifice with the holistic and eclectic view point that he is offering his Pran, representing his 'self', to the supreme Brahm.

Refer Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 13 and 20 in this context.

²The *Mukti* or liberation obtained by an ascetic who is symbolically doing the fire sacrifice by controlling his Pran and other vital winds is considered as the superior form of Mukti or the 'Ati Mukti' because it provides the ultimate emancipation and salvation for his soul. This is

because he not only controls his gross body and its organs but also his subtle body consisting of his mind and Pran which are the symbolic abodes of the Moon God, thereby virtually exercising control over even the latter. Again, since all the religious activities are dependent upon the lunar calendar, he has virtually overcome the restrictions imposed by various formalities and feels free and liberated. He does not have to depend upon them for his salvation.

In essence, sage Yagyavalkya says that an enlightened, wise and self-realised person who understands the importance of controlling the vital wind called Pran through the process of Pranayam as practiced by an ascetic, and which is symbolically represented by the Udgata Ritwik when he has to exercise control over his breath in order to sing melodiously during the fire sacrifice, is able to control all his vital functions. As a self-controlled and self-realised person, he is able to obtain stability and uniformity in his approach to the world; he is also able to exercise control over his mind and body. Stability and calmness leads him to follow his spiritual path without wavering and falling by the side due to the various distractions created by the enticements of the false charms of this world.]

6. Ashwal said, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya? The ‘Antariksha’ (i.e. the space beyond the earth where the Gods are supposed to dwell; the mythological heaven) appears to be without any foundation or support or prop (for it appears to have no end and virtually dangles like a canopy covering the mortal world from the top). Say then with what help can a Yajmaan (the chief patron of the fire sacrifice) can hope to go the heavens? [That is, since the way to the heaven is supposed to pass through the vast sky called the Akash just above the surface of the earth and which has no end, how is it possible for the patron to cross it to reach the heaven? Or, if the heaven has no support and any root based on the earth, how can the patron climb up to reach it to obtain a dwelling there?]

Yagyavalkya answered, ‘The patron who treats the chief priest called Brahmin Ritwik as a personification of Brahma, the creator and the patriarch of creation and the senior most God himself, and the Mana, his mind and heart, as the personification of the Moon God, is able to climb up to the Antariksha with their help. Verily, this Mana is the Moon personified, and this Mana is Brahma personified too. This holistic approach to the fire sacrifice is what gives Mukti (liberation and deliverance), and it is through it that the chief patron of the fire sacrifice gets what is known as the ‘Ati Mukti’.

Now the Sampad (i.e. the different resources by which the fire sacrifices are successfully accomplished) is being narrated in the following verses (6).

[Note—There are two planes on which any religious activity such as the fire sacrifice is done—one is the physical plane wherein the patron finances the expenses of the entire exercise by hiring priests and gets the benefit because any activity or deed would necessarily produce a relevant result, in this case fulfillment of some desires and aspirations of the patron for which the sacrifice is done by the priests who are expected to do the rituals selflessly for the patron, and second is the spiritual and metaphysical plane when the subtle, mystical and sublime message hidden in formal exercises is understood for the greater spiritual benefit of the aspirant. Since the actual sacrifice involves huge financial

component which is beyond the reach of an ordinary man, it is the latter form of any religious activity which has a broader and far reaching importance.

The chief priest who presides over the entire ceremony is called *Brahma* and he is supposed to be as enlightened, wise, erudite, scholarly and expert in all the fields of spiritual, theological and metaphysical knowledge as Brahma, the creator and patriarch of creation, is said to be because this priest represents Brahma. He guides the other priests. With such an enlightened one taking over the mantle of providing welfare to the Yajmaan, the chief patron who arranges for and finances the sacrifice and gives donations, success in the endeavour is supposed to be pre-determined. Brahma is the creator of the Vedas which are encyclopedias of knowledge ever created in creation. Being the most enlightened and elderly one in the creation, he symbolically resides above the creation as its head. His symbolic residence is in the head of the body of a creature, because the intelligence and wisdom that a man has is located in his mind. The *Moon God* resides in the heart, because the emotions that a man possesses have their residence in the heart. The emotions keep on changing like the moon but the intellect is always uniform and steady. A person who allows himself to be guided by the intellect and the mind, where Brahm and his enlightened revelation Brahma have their exalted seats, is bound to rise higher and higher in his spiritual goals. With such an exalted God as Brahma presiding over and guiding the person in all his activities, the person is sure to attain the higher from of Mukti called the *Ati Mukti*. Ordinary *Mukti* might give him freedom from all his sins and misdeeds pertaining to this world, thereby providing him material benefits in this world, but true spiritual benefit is obtained when he realises his true 'self' and transcends the allurements offered by the illusive charms of this materialistic world. This is called *Ati Mukti*.

A patron who perceives this fire sacrifice from the eye of wisdom and erudition sees its metaphysical import and begins to perform a symbolic fire sacrifice on a daily basis by treating his Mana (mind) as the chief priest called Brahma who performs the symbolic sacrifice for him that would give him access to the pitcher of eternal bliss stored with the Moon God. Since Brahma is the creator of everything, including the world and its gains, so by giving the Mana its due importance the aspirant can simultaneously gain access to all the worldly gains that he desires along with his spiritual pursuits. He can also use this Mana to break free from the bondage of the world to obtain 'Ati Mukti', because it is the Mana that is at the root cause of all bondages.

The mind plays a pivotal role in any activity—if anything is done with full involvement of the mind and heart called the Mana, then it produces better results as compared to a deed done with a 'half-heart' and with the 'mind focused somewhere else'. The Mana is said to be the abode of the Moon God; the moon is said to be the pitcher of Gods where the ambrosia of eternity and bliss is stored by them. When one has access to this ambrosia, one attains eternity and bliss like the Gods, which symbolically refers to the attainment of *Mukti* from worldly worries and miseries. A man who has been able to control his mind is indeed a happy man because then he would have peace and stability of mind and would not be unduly perturbed by the vagaries of this deluding and entrapping world of illusionary material pleasures and comforts.

Desires and aspirations are like the endless *sky* because they have no end. When one is able to lift oneself above mundane considerations and rise higher on the spiritual plane, he is deemed to have obtained freedom

from all mundane worldly fetters that shackle a creature to this material world of deluding attractions and illusionary charms which are like the mirage in a desert. But this liberation would only come with wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. This is a symbolic way of saying that one has attained *Ati Mukti* or the supreme form of liberation because it has been achieved through the path of wisdom and there is no chance of falling back.

This is how the patron reaches the symbolic heaven in the *Antariksha* where there is perpetual peace, happiness and bliss. The *Moon* which is the pitcher of ambrosia is located in the subtle sky of the heart called the 'Hriday-Akash' where the emotional aspect of the *Mana* is located, while the mind is the seat of the wise *Brahma* located in the head in the area known as the 'Vyom' literally meaning the sky. In other words, the ambrosia of eternal peace and happiness is available in a person's own heart and no where else, while his own mind is the great teacher who can give him moral guidance and support. That is also why the word *Mana* combines these two entities depending upon the context in which the word is used.]

7. [In the following verse nos. 7-10, Yagyavalkya answers technical questions pertaining to the ritualistic process involved in performance of the fire sacrifice.]

Ashwal asked again, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! How many Richas (hymns or Shlokas or Mantras of the Veda) would the Hota use today while offering oblations to the fire sacrifice?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Three Richas'.

Ashwal persisted, 'What are the names of these three Richas?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'The 1st Richa is called 'Puronuvakya' (i.e. the sacred hymns said before the start of the process of offering oblations to the sacred fire; these are like the prologue). The 2nd Richa is called 'Yajjya' (i.e. the sacred hymns which are chanted during the sacrifice; these hymns are like the main body of the text). Finally, the 3rd Richa is called 'Shasyaa' (i.e. the sacred hymns said after the sacrifice is finished; these hymns are like the epilogue)'.

Ashwal then asked, 'Who is conquered or vanquished or subdued by the means of these Richas?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'The entire living creation or the whole world can be vanquished or subdued by them!' (7)

[Note--The *three Richas* and the last statement 'the entire living creation' when read together implies (a) the past, the present and the future; (b) the three known worlds—the subterranean, the terrestrial and the celestial; (c) the three Gunas—the Satvic or the noblest quality, the Rajsic or the medium qualities, and Tamsic which are the lowest and the meanest qualities; (d) the three states of existence of the consciousness—the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep state; (e) the Trinity Gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder.

So these three Richas help the aspirant Yajmaan (chief patron) who performs the fire sacrifice to conquer all of them at once. In other words, he is able to exercise his control over all the domains in the world where he reaches and wishes to exercise his control.

He is able to know about his past so as to control the deeds done in the present time which would affect his future. By observing the past, he comes to realise the effects of the deeds that he had done in the past and from which he is suffering now, so that he can amend his way and secure a bright future for himself.

By conquering the three symbolic worlds he is able to have a common domain where righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility of thought and conduct can prevail.

By transcending the three states of consciousness, he is able to reach the 4th state of existence called the 'Turiya' where he is able to obtain perpetual and everlasting bliss and happiness.

By symbolically transcending the Trinity Gods, he becomes one like Brahm himself, because these Gods have emerged from that Brahm who is superior to all of them taken together.

By transcending all the three Gunas or qualities which are inherent in the entire creation, he is deemed to have become neutral and dispassionate, the divine and unique characteristics possessed by Brahm.

In other words, these Richas sung or chanted during the fire sacrifice ritual can elevate the patron to a high pedestal of existence and make him equivalent to Brahm, the supreme and transcendental Being.]

8. Ashwal continued with his examination, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! How many offerings would the priest called Adhwaryu make to the fire sacrifice today?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Three offerings'.

Ashwal asked him, 'Which are those three?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'The first is that which lights the fire (such as Ghee/clarified butter and other inflammatory materials), the second is that which produces a sound (such as the hissing, crackling, snapping and sizzling, the sound produced when the firewood, fuel and other ingredients such as flesh of sacrificed animal are offered to the fire pit), and the third is that which extinguishes (douses) the fire and make it disappear above the earth (such as the offerings of milk and Som, which is the sanctified liquid extracted from a herb of the same name and is used as an intoxicating and invigorating drink during fire sacrifices; these help to calm down the ferocity of the burning fire, leaving it subdued in the fire pit)'.

Ashwal asked, 'Whom does the Yajmaan (the chief patron) vanquish or conquer or subdue by these three offerings? Or, in other words what reward does the patron expect by making these three offerings?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'With the help of the first type of offering/oblation, the Yajmaan (on whose behalf the sacrifice is being done) symbolically obtains victory over the 'Dev Loka' because the abode of the Gods is radiant and illuminated like the leaping flames of the kindled fire¹. With the second type of offering/oblation he obtains symbolic victory over the 'Pitri Lokas' where there is a lot of noise². Lastly, with the third type of offering/oblation he obtains victory over the 'Prithivi Loka'³ which is where the mortal humans live, which is considered the lowliest amongst the three types of Lokas, and where the 'fire element' is in a dormant form (8).

[Note :- ¹The *Dev Loka* refers to the heavens where the Gods live. It is here that the cosmic sacrifice was symbolically performed by Brahma

and the other Gods at the very beginning of creation. The Gods have their residence in the heavens which is a metaphor for an exalted stature, and they represent the best forms of various elements and virtues that the supreme creator has created. Radiance, illumination and splendour are associated with something that is auspicious, virtuous, glorious and noble, as opposed to darkness which is akin to the opposite virtues. So when the offerings/oblations of highly inflammable materials such as butter and dry fuel such as thin strips of firewood and other incendiary material are made into the sacrificial pit which helps to light the fire, the leaping flames with their radiance, brilliant light and splendour symbolically tell the patron that his wishes have been fulfilled and he is being rewarded with the glories equivalent to the glory of the kindled fire with a bright flame.

²The *Pitri Loka* refers to the place where the spirits of dead ancestors reside. The offerings/oblations offered to them satisfy them and they bless the performer of those sacrifices. According to the Purans, the spirit of the dead creature goes to the Pitri Loka where the Death God Yam punishes it for its sins. As a result, these dead creatures make a lot of noise and fuss when they are subjected to physical punishment by Yam. When animals are being sacrificed, they also make a lot of noise and fury which is like the ruckus created by the suffering spirits in the Pitri Loka. Besides the sacrificial animals, there are other reasons why a noise is created in the fire pit, such as the sound of hissing and sputtering and crackling caused by different types of firewood and other sacrificial herbs etc. put into the fire pit. All the noise and din indicates to the patron that he has been rewarded with access to the Pitri Loka.

The hissing sound emanating from certain fuels put in the fire pit also indicates the hush-hush manner in which ghosts and spirits make their presence felt during the fire sacrifice. Thus the cacophony of sounds created during the fire sacrifice symbolically signal to the patron that the spirits of his dead ancestors have come to offer their blessings to him.

³The *Prithivi Loka* refers to the earth where human beings live. When, at the conclusion of the sacrifice, milk and Som are put into the fire pit, the fire dies down and remains smoldering for sometime before cooling down completely. The ash so produced resembles the earth element symbolising this world where the human beings and other mortal creatures live. This ash is from a fire that has come to an end, or in other words it symbolises a 'mortal fire' which can be aroused and calmed down as compared to the 'cosmic fire element' which is eternal, immortal and burns steadily. However, this extinguished fire indicates to the patron that his efforts have been rewarded in the sense that he has been able to obtain victory over the realm where the fire can be extinguished. In other words, he has established his sway over the mortal world where the humans and other mortal creatures live.

Here the bowl of the earth is regarded as the sacrificial pit. The last offering of milk and Som represents the drinks drunk by humans. When the Fire God accepts it, it cools down and enables the patron to enjoy the benefits of drinking these two rejuvenating liquids available on earth, as it is on earth where these two liquids are produced.

It is well known that the fire element is eternally present in the bowl of the earth, so much so that if that fire and its temperature were to affect the surface of the earth, the life on it would be roasted alive. So the cooling down of the fire in the fire pit indicates that it has cooled on the 'surface of the earth' to make it habitable for the creature while remaining ever present inside it in a dormant form, ready to leap back to

life when required, as indicated by the red hot charcoal/embers present in the fire pit at the conclusion of the sacrifice that can be revived back into leaping flames once fresh fuel is added to them.]

9. Ashwal asked, ‘Sitting in the south direction, how many Gods would the chief priest, who is known as Brahma, invoke to provide protection to the fire sacrifice (and the patron in turn)?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Only one God’.

Ashwal him, ‘Who is that God; by which God?’

Yagyavalkya answered, ‘That God is called the Mana (the mind and the heart). The Mana is without an end, and so are the guardian angels or the Gods that protect the world. This God is called ‘Vishwa Deva’ or the God of the various worlds. With the help of that one God represented by the Mana, the Yajmaan, who is the patron of the fire sacrifice, is able to obtain victory over infinite worlds (9).

[Note--The *Mana*, represented by the mind and heart of a man, determines what the man is, how he thinks, what are his emotions, and how he reacts towards a given circumstance. A man who has been able to control his mind and heart is able to control the whole world besides being able to control his own sense organs—the five sense organs of perception and the five sense organs of action—which are generally uncontrollable. These organs have their own patron Gods; so by controlling them the aspirant patron of the fire sacrifice is literally able to control these Gods. The individual creature is a microcosm of the entire cosmos; so when these individual Gods representing the various sense organs are controlled, the entire cosmos is symbolically controlled. In other words, this one God called the Mana can help the patron to attain victory over all the *Vishwa Devas* and the world where these Gods have their sway. This is a symbolic way of saying that such a man who has controlled his Mana is able to have victory over the entire world because the world exist only as long as the Mana decides that it has any relevance for it, and as soon as the Mana decides that the world is of no consequence, it ceases to exist.

If the God representing the Mana is benevolent and favourably inclined towards a man, the latter is deemed to be very fortunate and happy, because then he would be able to control himself and rise above the mundane. He would pursue spiritual matters unhindered, be self disciplined and would not react impulsively towards a given set of circumstances. Having control over his emotions and having a stable mind is a rare gift that a man can hope to possess.

Verse no. 6 has already stated that the Mana (mind/heart) is the Brahma or the chief priest of the fire sacrifice. If this chief priest is learned and wise, the whole sacrifice would be successful and the desired results would be attainable. So if a man’s Mana is properly tuned, controlled and educated, if it is wise and enlightened, then all accomplishments are easily available to him. Even as a wise Brahma priest can successfully guide the rest of the priests during the sacrifice, a wise Mana can also successfully guide and control all the activities as well as all the sense organs of the man, thereby symbolically enabling him to obtain victory over the entire world.]

10. Ashwal asked once again, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! How many Stotras (hymns of the Sam Veda) would the Udgata sing today doing the sacrificial rituals?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'Three Stotras'.

Ashwal asked him once again, 'Which are those three Stotras'.

Yagyavalkya replied, 'They are 'Puronuvakya', 'Yajjya' and 'Shashya'¹.

Ashwal persisted with his query, asking him, 'Out of these, which are the ones that live in the body of the creature'.

Yagyavalkya replied, 'The Pran is Puronuvakya, the Apaana is Yajjya, and the Vyan is Shashya Stotra respectively²'.

Ashwal asked, 'On whom can one obtain victory with the help of these Stotras?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'The Puronuvakya Stotra is used to obtain victory over the earth; the Yajjya Stotra for victory over the Antariksha (the heaven where the junior Gods live; the space above the earth); and the Shashya Stotra helps in obtaining victory over the Duloka (the upper heaven where the senior Gods live, including Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder)³'.

Hearing these answers of Yagyavalkya, Ashwal became silent (because he realised that it is impossible to defeat Yagyavalkya in such debates and humiliate him by interrogation)⁴ (10).

[Note—¹These three types of Stotras have been defined in verse no. 7 above. ²*Pran* wind which is present in the nostrils and usually called breath represents the *Puronuvakya Stotra*. This class of Stotras is the first ones pronounced at the beginning of the chanting and as an invocation Stotras. Since the breath is the primary and most important wind present in the body for the simple reason that it injects life in the otherwise lifeless body, it is equivalent to this Stotra because the latter also signifies the beginning of a new phase of religious life symbolised by the fire sacrifice marked by fervour and vigour once the sacred fire is lit.

The other winds come into play only when the Pran has successfully infused life into the gross body. After Pran, the next vital wind is *Apaana* because it refers to the inhaled wind which helps in ingestion of food and drink through the mouth. It then helps in its movement through the intestines, controlling and aiding digestion and elimination of excreta. Therefore, it symbolises the process of life while it is in progress because only a living body digests food and eliminates the waste product. Hence it is like the second class of Stotras called *Yajjya* which are chanted during the actual rituals while they are in progress.

The *Vyan* wind pervades throughout the body, and it assumes importance only because the *Apaana* wind has digested food and the body nourished by the food needs some kind of wind to support its various parts. The *Vyan* wind which lives in the ears, thighs, shoulders, throat, waist and heels etc. is spread virtually throughout the body. It resembles the *Shashya* Stotra sung/chanted at the conclusion of the sacrifice to symbolise the fact that once the fire sacrifice is done successfully, the patron's name and fame spreads uniformly everywhere and he is able to accomplish all his desires and aspirations.

³Living creatures live on this earth; the sacrificial fire is also lit on the surface of the earth. So the *Puronuvakya* Stotras symbolise life on this earth, and consequentially they symbolise the grant of victory over

earth or this mortal world. The fire once lit is radiant and splendid like the glory of heavens where the Gods live. So the Yajjya Stotras indicate the symbolic victory over the *Antariksha*. Finally, the concluding Stotras called Shasya resemble the conclusion of any religious activity resulting in fulfillment of wishes and expectations of the aspirant—which should be attainment of Moksha or liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death symbolised by attainment of the *Duloka* where the supreme Lord resides.

⁴Ashwal had tried to prove that Yagyavalkya was not qualified or competent enough to claim the right to take away the reward of the thousand cows as declared by king Janak, who incidentally was the Yajmaan or the chief patron on whose behalf the sacrifice was being performed, without first proving his bonafides, his competence and expertise. So this Brahmin Hota (Ashwal) asked all the technical questions pertaining to metaphysical importance of the various aspects of the fire sacrifice. When Yagyavalkya answered all the questions correctly, Ashwal fell silent because he could not prove that Yagyavalkya was not worthy or competent enough to claim the announced reward.]

Canto 3 Brahmin 2

[In this section, Yagyavalkya was interviewed by another sage called Aartabhag.]

1. After the interview with Ashwal, the next one to question Yagyavalkya was Aartabhag, the son of Jaratkaar. He asked Yagyavalkya, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! How many Grahas¹ and Atigrahas are there?’

Yagyavalkya, ‘There are eight Grahas and eight Atigrahas’.

Aartabhag asked, ‘Which are these eight Grahas and eight Atigrahas?’ (1).

[Note :- ¹The word *Graha* means an orb, a planetary body, such as a star. These bodies attract others because of their inherent gravitational powers to pull. The word also means to accept, to receive, to seize, to catch hold of. The word ‘Ati’ added as a prefix to *Graha* signifies the extra power that a particular *Graha* has; a kind of ‘super’ *Graha* or *Ati-Graha*. Or in other words, the entity called the *Ati-Graha* has a greater importance than the other entity known simply as *Graha*.

Now here the word *Graha* does not mean any physical star or planet, but is used to refer to the various organs of the body which tend to attract the external world towards the creature through their respective functions of perception. In other words, the creature’s different organs of perceptions are the ‘Grahas’ because they accept stimuli from the external world, or pull the world towards the creature. Conversely, they become a mean by which the creature allows himself to be surrounded or besieged or tainted by the world and its characteristic delusions.

The factors in the world that allure the creature’s organs of perception towards themselves, thereby establishing that they are more powerful and effective are called *Ati-Graha* simply because they prevail over the organs of perception, and through them over the creature himself, by pulling them towards themselves.

The following verse nos. 2-9 below elaborate on this point and make the meaning clear.]

2. [Verse nos. 2-9 describe what are the Grahas and what are the Ati-Grahas.]

Sage Yagyavalkya replied, 'Pran, the vital wind called breath that sustains life, is called 'Graha', while the Apaana wind (that passes down the intestine and helps in ingestion of food, its passage through the intestine, its digestion there, and its excretion through the anus) is the Atigraha. The Pran virtually depends upon the Apaana to smell anything in this world (2).

[Note--The word *Apaana* is generally associated with the foul smelling flatus passing out of the anus. Since Apaana is responsible for excretion of food, and anything that is excreted decays and produces a 'smell' which is then picked up by the nostrils where the Pran wind resides, it is said that the Pran wind depends upon the Apaana to smell anything.

The word Apaana also refers to that thing which is not acceptable, because the word 'Paana' means something which can be taken in, eaten or accepted and the prefix 'A' reverses the meaning, making it unacceptable. This wind which passes down the intestine and expelled through the anus stinks because of its passage through the body, collecting all the noxious gases from it. This wind is moving downwards, a movement associated with the degradation and demotion of the creature, and also to the earth element. This is because the residue expelled by the Apaana wind is called 'earth' or 'night soil'. All smells originate in earth because the latter harbours all residual matters; the open sky above the surface of the earth is clean and has no smell of any kind.

In contrast to the Apaana, the *Pran* is synonymous with fresh air rich with oxygen and other clean gases because it is inhaled by the nostrils from the outer open sky. Technically, the Pran is that wind which also passes out of the body, but it does so through the nostrils as opposed to the Apaana wind which passes down the anus.

The Apaana wind is regarded as being synonymous with 'smell', and therefore the Pran wind located in the nostrils 'smells anything' because it is the Apaana wind which brings these smells to it. Had there been no Apaana wind, the Pran wind wouldn't be able to smell anything. In other words, the Pran wind accepts the superiority of the Apaana wind to exhibit its ability to smell. The Pran wind is therefore the Graha because it is someone who accepts the smell, and the Apaana wind is Ati-Graha because it 'captures or seizes or gets hold of' the attention of the Pran wind towards its self (i.e. towards the smell which is inherent part of it).

Besides this point, the Pran wind is a metaphor for life while the Apaana is for death. So, although the Pran wind is considered superior to the Apaana wind, but if the Apaana wind stops its functioning, i.e. ingestion of food, its digestion and elimination etc., there would be accumulation of gases inside the abdomen of the creature, he would feel bloated, and the Pran wind would be useless in this condition because the person would ultimately die. Therefore, the Pran wind is symbolically subjugated to the Apaana wind; the Pran wind is dependent upon the proper functioning of the Apaana wind. In other words, the Apaana wind has a greater importance for the creature than the Pran wind. That is why

the Apaana wind is called Ati-Graha while the Pran is simply called Graha.]

3. The faculty and power of speech is akin to Graha, while the name of any object which is called out or described by that speech is the Ati-Graha. The faculty or power of speech is under the symbolic control or command of the things spoken about, because speech is relevant only when it is able to speak of or about the things that require attention (3).

[Note--The fifth word 'Grihit' in the text literally means one which is caught, captivated or captured. So, the speech is literally caught by or is under the captivity of that which is spoken. How? Well, when the faculty of speech speaks nasty things, such as using uncouth language and objectionable words, or says something unrighteous, or that which causes pain or harm to others, then the speech is acting in a manner which is not in its natural habit and it is not in consonance with its exalted stature as being the residence of the Fire God and Pran who are its patron Gods. Primarily this faculty is meant to speak good and auspicious things, to pray to God and recite the scriptures, to speak words which would benefit others, and it is to be used for the general good of the society at large. Instead of praying to Gods, if it is used to speak with an uncouth and vulgar language, it does not live up to its expectations.

Therefore, if this faculty speaks things that are not auspicious and good, things that it would not have spoken under normal situation, it does so because it is seized by certain circumstances that command the use of such language and words. For example, if one faces an adverse situation, one is forced to use strong words. There are situations when the only way out of a damning situation is to speak qualified lie. Once a man says something, he would have to keep on saying things so as to uphold what has already been said by him. So one lie leads to another lie; it sets off a chain reaction and creates a vortex of falsehood and deceit that completely drowns the creature and prevents its easy escape. Had the speech been independent, it would not have spoken anything that was wrong or untruthful or which created any kind of ill-will. But since it has to do so, it shows that it (the faculty that enables a man to speak) is subservient to what is spoken or spoken about.

Another example is when one gives a formal speech as when addressing a political gathering—he may be saying things to please others in which he does not believe himself. After all, if the fact is 'one', then what is the use of debates? In other words, the faculty of speech or the words spoken by a man depend upon the subject matter spoken about, or the circumstances which govern what this faculty speaks and how it is used. Since the circumstances are not always auspicious, favourable and truthful, the speech also is not always auspicious, favourable and truthful.

So we deduce that the faculty of speech is dependent upon what is being spoken about and the circumstances; it is literally 'bound' to that object which is the subject matter of speech. Hence, the object of this faculty is called Ati-Graha because it is the deciding and domineering factor, while the faculty of speech itself appears to be under its command, seized by it and subservient to it, and is therefore called Graha, literally meaning grasped or caught hold in a vice-like grip by the former. It is also called 'Graha' because the speaker is bound by what he speaks. The object or thing spoken about is the 'Ati-Graha' because it

attracts so many voices speaking about it in so many different ways and languages.]

4. The tongue is like the Graha, while the taste is like the Ati-Graha. The former is held captive by the latter. The tongue is the organ that tastes anything, and it holds value only because it can taste (4).

[Note--The *tongue* is captive of *taste* because a man may not like to eat anything which is not tasty, and on the other hand he would always yearn for anything that is tasty for the tongue. The man may violate many norms to satisfy his taste buds. The tongue is forced to eat anything that tastes good, though that something may be harmful for the body. Even if a man wants to eat something good for his health but with a bad taste, the tongue would abhor eating it; the tongue would simply withdraw itself from that taste.

It should be noted here that ‘speech’ and ‘taste’ are two separate functions—speech is dependent on Pran or the air present in the throat, while taste depends on the taste buds present on the surface of the tongue itself, though apparently the tongue is used for both the functions. The tongue is the organ of perception which accepts taste; hence it is called Graha. The taste itself is so powerful an element that it makes the tongue its slave, holding it under its sway, keeping it literally in its captivity; hence it is like the Ati-Graha. The greater power of taste is evident when we consider how a man who has already had a full meal would gorge upon delicacies, unmindful of the consequences on his health.]

5. The eyes are like the Graha, while the sight or things seen are the Ati-Graha. The eye is captive or subservient to the latter; the sights and things seen literally hold the eye captive. It is through the medium of the eyes that a person sees anything (5).

[Note--The *eye* has relevance because it enables a man to see the sights of the world. What is the use of the eye for a man who is blind? So, the eyes have their value and importance because of their ability to see. But the *sight* seen, the things that the eye *views*, and the relevant information about what they see is of greater importance for the man because if the eye sees things not worthy to be seen then it had better not possess the faculty of sight altogether.

The eyes are the receptive centers for all sights; they accept what is seen in the sense that if the eye decides not to see anything then the man would not be able to see it however hard he tries. This ability of the eye to ‘accept or grasp or catch hold of’ the various sights, the different shapes and contours and colours of the world, is why it is called Graha. On the other hand, the things viewed by the eye, the sights seen by the eye are so powerful that they can keep the eye riveted and enthralled by their charm and attraction. That is why we say that the man was seeing a particular thing as if in a trance, not even blinking once while his eyes were fixed on that object. Once the object is able to allure the eye by its charm, the latter would try to steal a surreptitious glance at every opportunity. Therefore, the sights and views seen are called Ati-Graha because they literally hold the eye captive and subjugated to them.

Further, the sights and/or views that the eyes see are of greater importance because if the eye is not able to register what it sees, if the man is not able to recollect what he has seen with his eyes, the eyes would be of no value. For example, a man might look at something blankly, without registering the sight that his eyes see, then the eyes

would be virtually seeing nothing. Oftentimes, a dead man's eyes are left wide open, it appears that body is perpetually gazing at an object, but that object is not seen or viewed by the dead body. So, in this case the eyes have lost their relevance. That is why the 'sight that is seen has a greater importance than eye itself'.

Again, the eye wishes to see those things which look attractive, charming and beautiful to it. The eye would turn away from something which is ugly and not attractive for it. If forced to see such a thing, the eye would try to move away from such things or sights that it hates. Therefore we conclude that the things seen by the eye has a greater importance than the eye itself; the object seen or the view beheld by the eye virtually keeps the eye captivated by its charm if it is attractive enough for the eye.

Hence, pleasant sights, or those sights or views that can keep the eyes enchanted and captivated by their charm, have the power known as Ati-Graha, i.e. the greater powers to capture the attention of the eye, as compared to the power of the eye called Graha to capture or register the sights of the world seen by it because the eye might be looking at anything without actually seeing or registering it if it does not appeal to it, or when the eye is forced to look at a thing due to certain compulsions of circumstances.]

6. The ears are like the Graha, while the words or sound heard by the ear is the Ati-Graha. The former is depended upon the latter, or is subservient to it. The creature hears anything through the medium of the ears (6).

[Note--The *ears* have relevance only because they hear the sound. The ears 'accept or capture' the sound emanating from the various directions. What is the use of the ear if it can't hear anything? So the value of the ear depends upon its ability to hear anything. So the ears are dependent upon the *sound heard* by them to be of any value for the man. Since they accept and virtually capture sound like a radar does, they are called Graha.

But the ear would not like to hear all the sounds—for there are many things, such as expletives and insulting words that the ears would not like to hear. The sound has an inherent ability to attract the ear, as is evident in the case of birds and animals especially when their ears literally stand up erect on hearing a sound. Another instance is when a sweet song is being sung somewhere; the man's ears stand up and turn in the direction from where the music is coming. The man might be doing anything else but his ears would be glued to that music. That is why the power of sound to attract the ears and keep them glued to it is much greater than the powers of the ears to attract the sound towards itself. Hence, the sound itself is called Ati-Graha.

When something very pleasant to hear is being said we say that 'we are all ears for what we hear', meaning that we are paying full attention to what is being said. Basically our attention is fixed on the pleasant sound component that attracts our ears towards itself when we hear anything attentively. The turning of the ears towards the source of the sound proves that the sound has the greater power to attract the ears than the ears have to attract the sound because the source of the sound will not move from its place to suit the comfort of the ears.]

7. The Mana (the intelligent mind and the sentimental heart) is the Graha, while the various 'Kamnas', or the various desires, wishes, yearnings,

ambitions, volitions and expectations that a man has are called its Ati-Graha. The Mana is subjugated by the various Kamnas that a man has. It is through the Mana that the various Kamnas manifest themselves and become active (7).

[Note--The *Mana* or the combination of the mind and the heart of a man harbour so many *Kamnas* or different desires, yearnings, volitions and ambitions in its bosom; the latter have such a great influence upon the former that all the thoughts, intelligence, discriminatory powers, behaviours, emotions and sentiments of a person are driven by his ambitions, hopes, desires, yearnings and expectations. So the *Kamna* virtually rules the roost and subordinates the intelligent mind and the emotional heart; the *Kamna* has a firm grip over the *Mana*. None of the other organs have *Kamna*—the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin etc. cannot have any *Kamna* in them. It is the mind and the heart combine, known as the *Mana*, which has it. This *Kamna* has the exclusive authority over the *Mana*; rather we should say that *Kamna* has a sway and complete hold on the *Mana* of a man. In other words, the *Mana* is under the captivity of the *Kamnas*.

The *Mana* is the subtle organ of the body that is the cause of all *Kamnas* (desires, wishes, hopes, aspirations etc.); it harbours them and accepts their existence. It is because of the mind and heart that a man thinks of the world and becomes attached to its attractions. If the *Mana* firmly decides to renounce the world and its attractions, then no matter how attractive it might be the man would lose all interests in it. For example, a sick man does not wish to eat anything even though the tongue has a natural tendency to taste delicacies; a tired man does not wish to be disturbed even though the ears are attracted by music; an emotionally disturbed man does not enjoy a pleasant sight even though the eye might wish to see it. Hence, the *Mana* is called *Graha* because it is through it that the man grasps or accepts this world and its attractions.

The *Mana* however is driven not so much by wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and rational thinking as it is by wanton *Kamnas*. The latter has such an over-bearing influence upon the former that the *Mana* literally becomes its serf; it is made subservient to it and held captive by it. In the process the *Mana* loses its prime characteristic feature of being wise, intelligent and rationale. Therefore the *Mana* is virtually bound to the *Kamnas*; the *Mana* is eclipsed by the *Kamnas*. Therefore, the *Kamnas* have a greater power than the *Mana*. Hence the *Kamna* is called an Ati-*Graha*, while the *Mana* is simply called a *Graha*.]

8. The hands are like the *Graha*, while the deeds that they do are the Ati-*Graha*. The hands are subservient to the deeds done by them; they are captive to the deeds. A man performs the deeds by his hands (8).

[Note--We say that a man's *hands* get tied by the *deeds* he has done or by the *actions* he has taken by his hands. That is, a man is bound by the consequences, good or bad, of the deeds done by his hands. The hands cannot say that they should be excused from the punishment due to them from a particular evil deed done by them. So the hands are literally captive to their deeds. In other words, the deed done by a man is the Ati-*Graha* that virtually holds the hands to ransom

The hands are akin to *Graha* because it is through the hands that we grasp or grab anything just like the gravitation pull of a planet grabs any celestial body flying too close to it. The powers of the hands to grasp the things of the world entitle them to be called a *Graha*, while the deeds

done by those hands which tie the hands to those deeds is called Ati-Graha because they have greater power as compared to the hands. The hands can let go of anything held by it, but the deeds done by the hands and actions taken by them irrevocably tie them down in their wake. A man cannot so easily wash his hands of his deeds, but he can easily leave or drop things that are held by the hands.]

9. The skin is like a Graha, while the sense of touch is like its Ati-Graha. Anything is felt with the help of the skin. In this way, there are eight Grahas, and eight Ati-Grahas' (9).

[Note--The *skin* is like Graha because it has the capacity to accept the world outside by the sense of touch or the sense of feeling. Even with closed eyes and ears, a man can say that a particular thing is present because he can feel its presence by the medium of the skin.

The pleasant or comforting sensation that anything provides to the man when it comes in contact with his skin is of greater importance than the skin's power to touch or feel because only those things which are pleasant and comforting for the skin sufficiently inspires it to yearn to touch and feel that thing. For example, the soft touch of a cool mountain breeze is very pleasant and comforting to the skin and the latter would yearn to feel it, while the scorch of the fire would turn the skin away from it.

But the skin is not sufficiently independent that if it does not wish to touch anything it would not have to do so. For example, even if the skin does not want to 'feel' the cold touch of the wind, it cannot help to prevent itself from feeling it as long as the wind continues to blow; the skin is forced to feel it. In other words, the skin is under compulsion to feel the wind blowing against it against its wishes. Similarly, even though the skin would not like touch or feel anything which is unpleasant for it, for example hot air, but it has to bear with it under certain circumstances, although it suffers in the process by getting burnt.

Therefore, all external sensations that compulsorily activate the faculty of *touch* inherently present in the skin are called Ati-Graha.]

10. Then Aartabhag enquired, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! Whatever that exist in this creation is like fodder/food for Death. Say then, who is that God who feeds upon that death?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Agni (fire element) is Death, and it is like food for Apha (water element). A person who knows this fact is able to conquer death' (10).

[Note--This is a very obvious deduction. *Fire* is equivalent to death because it kills, destroys or burns everything with which it comes in contact, while the *water* can extinguish that fire. Water douses or kills or devours fire, and it is not the other way round. So literally the water 'eats or devours' fire. If fire is to be treated as a synonym for death, then obviously water is equivalent to the authority that can even kill this formidable 'death' represented by fire that keeps everyone on their tenterhooks. In other words, by being able to overcome this overriding fear caused by the dread of fire, the patron is able to get liberation because being free from any kind of bondage, which here implies the fear of death, is tantamount to freedom and deliverance.

This is only possible for a wise patron who realises that it is the body that dies and not the eternal Atma. So once he detaches himself from involvement with the body and treats it as only a temporary habitat for

his Atma till its final salvation and emancipation, he is deemed to have overcome the fear of death. The main thrust of the Upanishads is to awaken the dormant wisdom lying in a hibernating state in a creature; once the truth dawns upon the creature's mental horizon then it needs no further prodding, no religious discourses or elaborate rituals to help it cross over from this seemingly interminable cycle of birth and death.]

11. Aartabhag asked once again, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! At the time of death, does the Pran (the vital winds) present in the body of a man move out of his body?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'No, it remains inside the body. That is why the body begins to bloat or swell after death and lies there as if asleep' (11).

[Note--(i) This is a practical observation that when a man dies, his *body begins to swell*. The Pran is the vital wind present in the body; this Pran is the same wind that is present outside the body. Once a wise self-awakened and enlightened sage realises that the supreme Brahm resides no where else but in his own bosom, that he himself is an embodiment of that Supreme Being, and that there is no such thing as duality in this creation such as a heaven somewhere higher up and a hell down under, he pulls in his Pran at the time of death to become one with the other vital winds present in the body and lies there like in a state of deep sleep. Once the inhaled breath is stopped inside the body as done during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam, it appears that the person is in a deep meditative sleep doing perpetual Yoga. That is why, according to this Brahmin, the body begins to swell after death. What is not mentioned here but subtly implied is the fact when the body would finally decay and disintegrate into its basic element such as earth, thereby removing the boundary which artificially separated the Pran inside the body with the elementary wind element outside the body, this trapped wind present inside the body would effortlessly and imperceptibly emerge from the body and then merge with the wind element universally present in the cosmos outside. This is called 'Mukti', or liberation and deliverance here and now.

The body swells because the trapped vital airs inside the body—which cannot escape through the nostrils—try to come out of the body, thereby inflating it like a balloon. Finally, when the pressure has reached a certain point, the body starts rupturing and falling apart, a process seen as decay of the body.

The 'swelling or bloating of the body after death' has another interesting connotation—the entire creation has had its origin in the body of the Viraat Purush, but as it grew and developed, it expanded and spread, or it 'swelled and became bloated' when consciousness in the form of the spark-of-life was injected into it by the supreme creator. Symbolically therefore, a self-realised man sees the death of his physical body as the supreme sacrifice when the gross is killed in order to salvage the subtle and eternal. Prior to death he was a limited mortal being, but now after death he expands to become equivalent to the Viraat Purush.

(ii) The type of Mukti described here is called 'Kaivalya' form of Mukti or liberation and deliverance. When an enlightened person dies, his Atma leaves his body and merges with the supreme Brahm who is present everywhere—not only in the sky or the heaven, but even inside the body of the creature. All his elements (i.e. earth, water, fire, air and space) will dissolve or vanish into their primary forms after sometime

when the body disintegrates—a well established biological fact that when any creature is left unattended after death, his body will gradually decompose and vanish into its primary elements. Essentially, this verse means that for an enlightened person, Brahm is here itself and not somewhere high above in the heavens. So, his vital winds need not make their exit from the body in order to merge with Brahm. They can do so even while remaining inside the body itself. That is why the body swells.

(iii) Please also refer to canto 6, Brahmin 2, verse nos. 1-16 of this Upanishads; canto 11, verse no. 1 of Subalo-panishad which is chapter 6 of this book and Chandogya Upanishad, canto 5, section 3, verse no. 1 to canto 5, section 10, verse no. 10 of the Sam Veda tradition.]

12. Aartabhag asked once again, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! What does not leave or forsake or abandon a person even after his death?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘His name. The name of the person, symbolised by his renown and glory, his fame as a good man or his infamy as a bad man, lasts for ever. The Vishwa Deva (the Lord of the world) is eternal. Both of them last for ever. So a wise and enlightened person attains the supreme, exalted stature equivalent to that occupied by the Vishwa Deva; he becomes immortal (because his name lasts for eternity). He virtually conquers the entire world after his death (because his good name spreads everywhere, even to those places where he couldn’t go while he was alive, conquering innumerable hearts and firing innumerable minds for all times to come) (12).

13. Aartabhag asked again, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! At the time after his death, when his voice and faculty of speech dissolve or merge back into the fire element, the Pran into the wind/air element, the eye into the sun, the Mana (mind and heart) into the moon, the ears into the different directions, the body disintegrates and merges with the earth element, the Atma into the sky element, the hairs on the body into the various herbs, the hair on the head into other plants, the blood and semen into the water element (i.e. when the individual constituent parts of the gross body dissolve and merge into their primary elements from where they had emerged in the beginning)—tell me, where does that Purush (the man; the true identity of the living, conscious being; the entity present in the living creature which has given it its life) then go or reside?’ [The word Purush is a masculine gender, but it should not be taken too literally for the Upanishads are not biased in favour of any gender. More important is the concealed philosophy.]

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Oh gentleman Aartabhag! Give me your hand. Both of us need to know and understand the answer to this question, but it is not proper to discuss the matter in this open assembly. (So let us go out to a lonely place to discuss the matter)’.

Both of them got up and went outside the venue to discuss it further. They returned cheerfully after sometime. They deduced that everything is ‘Karma’ (literally, deeds done by a man); they praised the Karma or the deeds done by a person while he is alive. They emphasised that by doing good (auspicious, righteous and noble) deeds, a person is blessed with eternal honours and praises, he gets a good name, is revered by all and is renowned for his good deeds and noble actions far and wide,

whereas doing bad (inauspicious, unrighteous and ignoble) deeds gives him a bad name, and he is reviled even after his death.

At the end of this discussion, Aartabhag fell silent (because he realised that Yagyavalkya was far superior in wisdom and erudition to all of them assembled there, and he had no ego and a sense of false pride as proved by the fact that he did not hesitate to admit that he had to research the answer to this question by mutual discussion) (13).

[Note--(i) Verse nos. 12 and 13 should be read together and the meaning becomes crystal clear. All who have taken birth in this mortal world would have to die—even Christ had to leave this body and die, Gautam Buddha, Mahavir, Lord Ram, Krishna, et al—all had to die. All the great philosophers, sages, seers, ascetic, hermits, scientists, social reformers—all had to die. War mongers died, and so did the greatest of apostles of peace. What remained behind them was their ‘name’—whether good or bad. And how did their name became good or bad? It was by the *deeds* which they did while alive in this world.

So the loud and clear message is this—good deeds make a man immortal in the honourable sense of the word, while bad deeds also make him immortal, but in a dishonourable sense.

Further, this answers the question— ‘Where does the Purush live after his death’. The simple answer is that he lives in his *name* —and the ‘name’ depends upon the good or the bad *deeds* that he has done in his life. A man is known and recognised the world over by his specific name that establishes his independent identity. If a man has done good deeds, his ‘good name’ lasts even after the death of his physical body. On the other hand, if he was a sinful man, his ‘bad name’ also lasts after his death. So, in effect, that ‘Purush’ outlives the body in the form of the ‘name’ which he has acquired as a result of the ‘deeds’ done by him during his lifetime.

Yagyavalkya has answered this question in another part of this Upanishad. See Canto 4, Brahmin 2, verse nos. 1-4.

(ii) Why did Yagyavalkya take Aartabhag out of the venue? It is because the venue was a place for doing the sacred fire sacrifice, a religious ritual. Hundreds of people were wasting their time listening to chants of the scriptures which they little understood and they were virtually meaningless for them; it was a waste of precious time which they could have spent in doing something good or more constructive. King Janak could have spent this enormous amount of money on some other welfare ‘deeds’, or initiated some welfare projects dedicated to his subjects, such as creating new jobs for them, providing the state with newer infrastructure, building houses, roads, inns etc., instead of pouring huge amounts of money down meaningless rituals and burning resources in the fire around which people sat idly, without doing anything, and hearing chants and watching rituals which did not add anything constructive to their lives. They could have spent this time tilling their fields, going about their daily life, doing commerce and generally enhancing the welfare of the people and the wealth of the society at large. It has been a constant refrain of the Upanishads that Mukti comes with understanding the Truth and not by any other physical rituals.

That is why the wise sages Yagyavalkya did not wish to emphasis the importance of ‘doing deeds’ in the midst of a society laying great importance on sitting around sacrificial altars, performing rituals the significance of which they knew nothing about, and pouring important and rare resource into the fire which would inevitably reduce it to ashes,

the resources which could have been otherwise better spent on the welfare of the state and its people. The sage did not want to annoy the king or his subjects emphasising the need to do work instead of wasting time sitting idly. That is perhaps he took Aartabhag aside to answer this question.]

Canto 3, Brahmin 3

This section describes the debate between sage Yagyavalkya and Bhujyu. In this Brahmin, the importance of the horse sacrifice is highlighted. Perhaps, after the concluding observations made in the previous Brahmin no. 2, that a man's name lasts because of his deeds and therefore deeds were more important than the sacrificial rituals, this Brahmin is included to assuage the roughed-feeling of king Janak. It kind of says—‘Well, the horse sacrifice is no less important in obtaining a good name because successful completion of this sacrifice entitles the chief patron to assume a good name as one who performs religious ceremonies and gives huge donations, and his good name and glory extends his fame to newer territorial realms which establishes him as an honourable and religious emperor’, because a religious ceremony is also deemed to be a good deed. But the only difference is that such great name and fame have relevance only in this material world, but they do not have any metaphysical importance for the spiritual world. On the contrary, even a humble man and a penniless hermit can acquire great name for himself if his deeds are great and honourable. In fact, a person's Mukti, i.e. his soul's liberation and deliverance, does not depend on any sacrifice ritual but on his own self-realisation.]

1. The next sage to interview Yagyavalkya was Bhujyu, the son of Laahya. He said, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! While wandering as mendicants in the central countries, we once happened to visit the household of Patanchal born in the clan of Kapyā. His daughter was possessed by some semi-god known as Gandharva (see Brahmin no. 7 also). When we asked who he (the Gandharva) was, he replied— ‘I am Angiras Sudhanwa’.

Asking him about ancient mythological histories and how the different worlds had ended, and where their inhabitants had gone, we finally asked him where Parikshit was. Where was he? Oh Yagyavalkya, we repeat the same question to you, where was Parikshit?’ (1)

[Note-- Bhujyu means that he has come to know where Parikshit was from the answer that the semi-god Gandharva had given him. But this is a secret known only to him. If Yagyavalkya could not answer this question, he would be deemed to have lost the question-answer session, and therefore he would be declared unfit to take the prized cows. This is because, just in the previous Brahmin, Yagyavalkya had emphasised that after the death of a person, he lives in his name and deeds. So, when Parikshit's mortal body was left behind by him at the time of his death, his good name survived along with the deeds done by him. So Bhujyu wished to enquire from Yagyavalkya as to where Parikshit can be located now if what he had said earlier was true.]

2. Sage Yagyavalkya replied confidently, 'That the Gandharva must have certainly replied that Parikshit went to that exalted abode where all those who successfully perform the Ashwamedh Yagya (the horse sacrifice) go'.

Bhujyu asked, 'Where do they go?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'The distance covered by the chariot of Aditya, the Sun God, during one day and one night, is called Ahanya. That place where Parikshit (who had done the greatest of sacrifices known as the Ashwamedh) had gone measures thirty-two Ahanyas.

That place is surrounded on all the sides by the earth (Prithivi) element measuring twice this dimension (i.e. the earth has a length of $32 \times 2 = 64$ Ahanyas). The ocean measuring twice this length (i.e. $64 \times 2 = 128$ Ahanyas) surrounds the earth¹.

[Now the question arises how Parikshit reached there through the two outer layers of water and earth? The answer is as follows--] There is a wafer thin microscopic passage or a pin-hole passing through these two outer shells or layers of this cosmic egg-shaped divine abode. This passage is as thin as the edge of a sharp razor, or has a thickness like that of the wings of a fly (i.e. it is micro fine and thin as a piece of paper). This hole or space is called Akash (sky). [This is the passage through which those who do horse-sacrifices go to reach their exalted habitat as described in this verse.]

The king of Gods called Indra (representing the supreme Lord presides over the sense organs of the body) became a bird and handed over Parikshit to the Wind God who took him (i.e. Parikshit) under his wings and placed him there where all those who are rewarded for doing the Ashwamedh Yagya go². This is how the Gandharva had praised the Wind God.

The wind element is however known by two names—viz. 'Vyashti' and 'Samashti'³. Those who know this fact become so exalted that they do not have to die again; they become immortal.'

At this answer, Bhujyu fell silent (2).

[Note--¹In other words, the exalted heaven where those who do great sacrifices go is viewed to be shaped like an egg, surrounded by concentric rings of earth and water. This is a symbolic representation of the cosmic egg from which the entire creation came into being. Since a man who does religious sacrifices is deemed to be doing an auspicious deed sanctified by the scriptures, he does not perish but obtains an exalted stature similar to the exalted creator represented by Hiranyagarbha. This egg-shaped Loka or world is indicative of this fact. It indicates that the creature has become immortal because the Hiranyagarbha is immortal; it is from the latter that the rest of creation has emerged. Any life needs support to live and grow, hence the reference to the earth element; water is obviously a necessity of life and hence the reference to the water. Perhaps the Upanishadic seer visualised this world based on his experience of the physical world in which he lived—because the earth is also surrounded by the ocean.

²Indra is the mythological king of Gods in heaven. From the metaphysical perspective, Indra is the chief Pran or the Atma/soul which presides over all the organs of the creature, because the word Indra is derived from the word 'Indri' meaning sense organs. Now, at the time of death, this Atma rides on the back of the Pran or vital winds present in

the body to escape from its bondage. It is believed that the Pran of an enlightened ascetic escapes through the hair-like slit on the top of the skull, called the 'Brahm Randhra'. The passage narrated here is a symbolic depiction of the passage of the Atma—the 'ocean of water' stands for all the bodily fluids present inside the body such as blood, urine, mucous etc. from which the vital spark of life called consciousness is gradually withdrawn after the conscious Pran has first withdrawn itself from the skin and other external organs of the body representing the 'earth'. Finally, the Pran, along with the Atma, makes its exit through the 'shell of the earth and water elements' represented by the bone, cartilage and flesh of the head region. This type of liberation is preferred by the Yogis (ascetics), and is regarded as the best form of death.

³(a) The word *Vyashti* refers to the concept of duality or separation, while *Samashti* refers to the notion of non-duality which is an all-inclusive concept. When anything which is essentially one exists in apparently different forms to facilitate special functions, or when the same thing assumes different forms to perform specialised functions, it is called 'Vyashti'. For example, the wind element is basically one indivisible entity like the sky, fire, water and earth elements, but it is assigned different names depending upon the functions that it performs—such as Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaan and Samaana. These names do not mean that the wind element has different physical forms, but it is given these names to facilitate understanding. But, because of different names and functions, they appear to be distinct and separate from one another.

When a truly wise man looks at the wind element, he sees only one form, i.e. 'wind' and nothing else. This later concept is called 'Samashti'. In the present context, the word 'Pran' refers to the wind element both in its Vyashti as well as Samashti forms—that is, the wise and learned man first collects all the winds from all the different parts of the body, called the Vyashti wind, and concentrates them at one place. In other words, all the winds are merged in one single wind element, giving it a Samashti form known as Pran. The Atma refers to this Samashti concept, while the body and its various sense organs with their own functions and consciousness are the Vyashti form. When these two concepts are unified into one single unit, the aspirant becomes one single whole; he becomes indivisible and immutable like the eternal and universal wind element. Obviously, this is liberation from ignorance caused by delusions about the reality.

By doing the horse sacrifice, which is regarded as one of the greatest of fire sacrifices, a person gets the reward that is available to both the types of scholars—those who believe in the philosophy of duality, called Dwait represented by the concept of Vyashti, and those who believe in the philosophy of non duality known as Advait represented by the concept of Samashti.

³(b) Another interpretation is this—any person or thing separated from his or its group is called a Vyashti. That is, a person separate or independent from the general group to which he belongs is known as Vyashti. Hence, that philosophy that treats a creature as an independent entity is called the Vyashti philosophy. On the other hand, Samashti is a composite of things belonging to a particular class. The wind or air is regarded as both the Vyashti as well as the Samashti because air is a singular noun as well as used to denote all the vital winds taken together. For example, a tree is Vyashti whereas a forest is Samashti; a water drop is Vyashti, whereas a body of water such as an ocean, a river, a pond etc. is Samashti.

Similarly, the vital wind that sustains life in the form of breath called Pran, when taken independently and separately from other vital winds present in the body, is called a Vyashti. On the other hand, when the same term 'air or wind' is applied to all the vital winds present in the body taken together as a composite unit, it is called a Samashti.

In this context of this verse, refer also to Canto 5, Brahmin 10.]

Canto 3 Brahmin 4

[This Brahmin describes the interview of Yagyavalkya by Ushasta, the son of Chakras, who asked the sage about the Atma.]

1. Ushasta, the son of Chakra, asked Yagyavalkya, 'Describe to me that Brahm who is clearly visible in the form of the manifest world (Vyashti), and the Atma that resides in the bosom all the creatures (Samashti)'.

Sage Yagyavalkya replied, 'It is your own Atma that is present in all the other creatures also, and it is known as Sarwantar'.

Ushasta then asked him, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! Who is Sarwantar¹—i.e. the one who resides in the bosom of all; the one who is uniformly and universally present inside all the creatures; the one who is all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent in this creation?'

Sage Yagyavalkya replied, 'That eclectic, mystical, sublime and divine entity which breathes air through the medium of the Pran is your Atma, and it also is the one that resides in the bosom of all living creatures. That which carries out the functions allotted to the Apaana wind is your Atma that resides in the bosom of all other creatures too. That which carries out the functions allotted to the Vyan wind is your Atma that is also present in the bosom of all other living creatures. And that which carries out the functions allotted to the Udaana wind is also your Atma which resides in the bosom of all other creatures too'² (1).

[Note—¹The word *Sarwantar* has two parts—viz. 'Sarwa' meaning 'all', and 'Antar' meaning 'in'. Hence the combined word means that entity that is present in the bosom of all the living creatures.

²Canto 1, Brahmin 4, verse no. 16, and Canto 2, Brahmin 4, verse no. 6, and verse no.14 elaborately elucidates the importance of *Atma* and how it is the only entity that really matters in this creation.

The *wind/air element* is a majestic and enigmatic entity having a glorious existence as independent Prans, the various vital winds mentioned in this verse, as well as in a combined form incorporated in a single word 'Pran'. Whereas the former is the Vyashti form of this element, the latter is called the Samashti form as described in Brahmin 3, verse no. 2.

The wind element itself is inert and inactive; it has no self-produced life in it nor does it have consciousness of its own. The vital subtle force which injects 'the spark of life' in the wind enabling it to show signs of life in its apparent mobility, activity, strength, powers and abilities is called its Atma, or its soul. The Atma is the driving force which actually activates the various forms of the wind/air elements to perform their respective functions.

The vibrations present in the wind/air element are the subtle signs of life and the presence of vital energy in it just like ripples present on the surface of the water in a pond is the sign of the vital energy present in water that forms these ripples and make them move. What is then this vital but subtle factor? It is this Atma which infuses this vital energy that is perpetually present in the wind/air which gives it its stupendous powers, strength and punch as is evident when the air element which appears to be idle and docile, lacking any vigour and vitality when present inside a closed pot, but the same air acquires a tremendous force and bashing powers when it assumes the form of a severe storm, a tornado or a hurricane, having an immense punch and powers of a formidable and colossus nature. This same air which assumes this destructive form is able to inject the vital spark of life in the form of the various Prans or vital winds inside the body of a creature. In the latter form as Prans, the wind/air plays a constructive role, while in the former form it plays a destructive role. But the driving force behind this otherwise neutral wind/air element is the subtle energy and power known as the Atma which injects punch, vigour, valour and vitality to the wind/air.

The Pran, Apan, Vyan and Udaan are the four vital winds that regulate the various functions of the gross body of the creature. Briefly, the 'Pran' is the breath; the 'Apan' is the wind moving down in the intestine, helping in ingestion of food and its digestion as well as its passage down the body till it is excreted through the anus; the 'Vyan' wind is that which helps to maintain equilibrium, and Udaan is the one which helps the body to rise and move about, and the 'Samaan' wind helps in equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body. These vital winds can act haphazardly if not controlled by some supernatural authority, for it is obvious that there is no special demarcating boundary between any two given winds, even as water from different sources or having different colours, when brought together, become one inseparable mass. So surely there is some mysterious mystical power that regulates these winds, and although they exist side by side and interact with each other, they still perform their assigned functions properly, diligently, separately and without interfering in the function of the other wind. That is, this mystical and majestic power helps to regulate the functions of the winds independently. That authority which brings on this regulation is called the Atma.]

2. Ushasta Chakrayan said, 'What you say is like someone saying— 'This is a cow, this a horse'. Your explanation is dubious and not clear. Tell us clearly about that Brahm which is truthfully visible in the form of this manifest world, and the Atma that resides in the bosom of all the creatures in a universal and uniform manner though it is not visible'.

Yagyavalkya replied assertively, 'It is your own Atma that is present as the Atma inside all other living creatures. It is impossible for you to see that mysterious entity inside you which enables the faculty of your sight to see the sights of this world; you cannot hear him who enables your faculty of hearing to hear the sounds of this world; you cannot comprehend and think about him who is the one who thinks, ponders and comprehends, and who enables your intellect and mind to think, ponder, contemplate and rationalise¹.

It is your majestic Atma which has these eclectic, divine and sublime mystical qualities; it is your pure conscious and redoubtable Atma which is an unexplainable, inexplicit, enigmatic and mysterious entity; it is your divine Atma which is all-pervading, immanent and a resident in the bosom of all the creatures. Besides this Atma, everything else is mortal; everything else is perishable and a cause of sorrows, sufferings and miseries; everything is a cause of numerous confusions, doubts, perplexities and consternations for you’.

Hearing this Ushasta fell silent (2).

[Note--¹In other words, you cannot understand and know him who is an expert in all that is to be seen, heard and known in this world. Your reach is limited to your immediate physical environs but that entity has an infinite and measureless reach; you see, hear and know with your own single eye, ear and mind respectively, but that supreme and transcendental Being has countless eyes with which it sees, innumerable ears with which it hears, and fathomless mind and intellect with which it knows and comprehends. It is made possible because that supreme and enigmatic Being is all-pervading and omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. So, how can you expect to measure that entity which is measureless?]

Canto 3 Brahmin 5

[This Brahmin describes the interview of sage Yagyavalkya by Kahol, the son of Kaushit, about the same topic upon which the earlier Brahmin was based.]

1. Then came the turn of Kahol, the son of the Kaushitk clan. He asked Yagyavalkya, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! Now describe for me that Brahm who is truthful but invisible, and the Sarwantar Atma which resides uniformly and universally in the bosom of all the living creatures of this creation’.

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘It is your Atma that resides in the bosom of the rest of the creatures also’.

Kahol asked again, ‘Which is that Sarwantar Atma?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘It is beyond the reach of hunger, thirst, old age, death, sorrows and sufferings as well as all the delusions and attachments pertaining to the world. In other words, that Sarwantar Atma is not affected by any of them. Those Brahmins who are learned, erudite, scholarly, sagacious, enlightened and wise understand the essential and truthful nature of the Atma, and consequentially they renounce their natural attractions and longings for their sons, their desires and yearning for worldly wealth and prosperity as well as for the material objects of comfort and gratification in this world. They roam about freely, remaining detached and disassociated from this world while subsisting on food obtained by begging.

Having love and attachment for a son makes a man desire and greed for wealth (so that his son lives happily and comfortably). The desire for the latter compels him to get involved in the world (because wealth can be

generated only by interacting with this world, doing commercial activity with selfish interest, creating and hoarding wealth, and generally being selfish in his thoughts, behaviours, deeds, actions and manners). Hence, those who are expert and scholarly Brahmins should realise the relationship between these two pairs, and gathering enough courage and getting convinced about the formidable strength of the Atma, they should spend their time and energy to contemplate and meditate upon the Truth represented by the Atma (instead of frittering away their precious energy and time in pursuing this deluding and artificial world which is like a mirage in a desert).

Once this realisation dawns upon the mind of the wise aspirant, he becomes saintly and pious like a hermit, a sage, an ascetic or a monk; he develops the characteristic innocence and purity of a child. He then should become silent and practice silence with diligence¹. A Brahmin who does so becomes honourable, privileged, grateful, fulfilled and contented. Verily, this is the only way to become a Brahmin in the true sense. That is, one who follows these noble paths is truthfully called a Brahmin because he would have developed such auspicious and noble qualities as desirable in a true Brahmin. Aside of this, all the rest is perishable and a cause of perpetual sorrows, suffering, perplexities and miseries’.

At this answer, Kahol fell silent (1).

[Note—¹A wise and self-realised Brahmin who has become wisened about the supremacy of the Atma uses his faculty of speech only to speak the truth. Since truth needs not much talking, most of the time he keeps silent. Liars are glib talkers, not the truthful ones. He speaks only when necessary, and for the rest of the time he prefers to remain silent, spending his time in contemplation and meditation.]

Canto 3 Brahmin 6

[This Brahmin describes the interview of sage Yagyavalkya by Gargi, the daughter of Vaachknu.]

1. Gargi, the daughter of Vaachknu, asked sage Yagyavalkya, ‘When everything is submerged in or is surrounded by water, then in what is water submerged, or with what is it surrounded?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Oh Gargi! Water is surrounded by or submerged in air. The air element completely soaks the water element from within and without¹, completely embracing it from all sides so much so that it is impossible to separate them from one another. [In other words, the air/wind element warps and wefts through the water element like a multi-coloured yarn is weaved into a cloth or carpet with intricate designs.]’.

Gargi asked, ‘What is the wind/air surrounded by, or what submerges it from all the sides and warps and wefts through it, completely soaking it?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Oh Gargi! The air is submerged in and surrounded on all the sides by the ‘Antariksha Loka (the space or the sky above the earth)’.

Gargi asked, ‘And what surrounds and submerges the Antariksha Loka, completely soaking it from all the sides and warping and wefting through it?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The Gandharva Lokas. [The Gandharva is a semi God whose abode is junior to the heaven where the other Gods live.]

Gargi asked, ‘Then what surrounds and submerges as well as warps and wefts through the Gandharva Loka, completely soaking it from all the sides?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The Aditya Loka (or the abode where the legendary mythological Sun God named Aditya lives; here referring to the physical space of the solar system)’.

Gargi asked, ‘What surrounds and submerges as well as warps and wefts through the Aditya Loka, completely soaking it from all the sides?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The Chandra Loka (or the abode where the mythological Moon God resides; here referring to the sky in the vicinity of the celestial moon)’.

Gargi asked, ‘What surrounds and submerges the Chandra Loka from all the sides, completely soaking it as well as warping and wefting through it?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The Nakshatra Loka (or the abode where the stars live; here referring to the deep recesses of the sky where the stars are present)’.

Gargi asked, ‘What surrounds and submerges as well as warps and wefts through the Nakshatra Loka, completely soaking it from all the sides?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The Dev Loka (or the abode where the Gods live; the mid level heaven)’.

Gargi asked, ‘What surrounds and submerges as well as warps and wefts through the Dev Loka, completely soaking it from all the sides?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The Indra Loka (or the abode where the king of Gods called Indra Lives)’.

Gargi asked, ‘What surrounds and submerges the Indra Loka, completely soaking it from all the sides as well as warping and wefting through it?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The Prajapati Loka (or the abode where Prajapati Brahma, the creator and the caretaker of the creation, lives with his subordinates)’.

Gargi asked, ‘What surrounds and submerges as well as warps and wafts through the Prajapati Loka, completely soaking it from all the sides?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The Brahm Loka (where the supreme, transcendental Brahm lives)’.

Gargi asked, ‘And what surrounds and submerges as well as warps and wefts through this Brahm Loka, completely soaking it from all the sides?’

At this, Yagyavalkya warned her to stop forthwith — ‘Oh Gargi! Don’t ask beyond that, lest your head would fall down, i.e. you could die for asking questions which are regarded as ‘Ati Prashana’ about that supreme transcendental entity (i.e. about the ultimate Truth and Reality)

about which asking questions that cross certain prohibited limits are not to be asked or answered².

At this, Gargi fell silent. [But she did not relent, and as we shall see later on in Brahmin 8 below, she again resumed here questioning, asking more questions from Yagyavalkya.] (1)

[Note—¹We would take a simple example to understand this phenomenon. Suppose we wish to make ball of mud or clay which is in a powdered form. We first kneed it with water which now acts as a plaster which binds the individual grains of clay or mud together and helps them to stick together as a ball. The water molecules act as an adhesive here. Once this water is dried, the clay or mud particles would fall apart. This instance would help to understand what is meant in this Brahmin. Each individual gross and subtle element mentioned in this Brahmin is kept in place because it is bound and tied together by certain forces of Nature that keep it in place there by the help of other elements which together and individually help to glue together the individual strands or units of these elements much like multi coloured threads are woven together into the texture of a cloth or a carpet having multi-coloured intricate designs woven into its texture. The final cloth or carpet is the visible world, while the individual threads are the different elements that form the basic coir from which the entire creation has been moulded.

Even as the carpet and the cloth have a cause to be there, i.e. there was a certain weaver who had first decided to weave a carpet or the cloth and then weaved the yarn with which he crafted it, this entire world has a cause called which resides in the 'causal body', and it is the supreme consciousness called the Atma or Brahm.

The presence of air in water is very clear when we watch the movement of water in a river or ocean. Left to its own, the water element does not show any sign of movement, as the water in a closed pitcher proves. But this same water has huge waves that can capsize boats and rise like a wall on the surface of the ocean. The heaving of the ocean, its howl and roar are all there due to the presence of air/wind element hidden in its bosom. Even the ripples seen on the surface of an otherwise calm pond or lake are due to the air/wind element present subtly in that body of water.

²There are five basic elements in creation—sky/space, wind/air, fire/energy, water/fluid and earth in increasing degree of grossness. These form the gross and visible world where the living creatures that die (i.e. the mortal creatures) dwell. Beyond this world there is the dwelling of the spirits and the superior forms of spirits called Gods and semi-Gods. These are comparatively of a longer life-span because they are in spirit or wind/air element form. But there is still an existence which is like the eternal and unmoving sky element—i.e. the existence of Brahm, the eternal Truth in which all other elements have their dwelling as is evident in practical terms when we consider the fact that everything that exist does so in the space of the sky. The word 'sky' refers to an entity that has an infinite dimension; it is beyond measurement and comprehension. Now, if anything is 'measureless, is infinite, and is eternally imperishable', say how can that be surrounded by anything? This 'sky element' which has these unique and mysterious characteristics is synonymous with the Brahm Loka where the enigmatic and mystical entity known as Brahm resides. Like the example of water that dissolves salt in it wherein it is impossible to say whether it is the salt that is surrounded by water or it is the other way round, it is similarly

impossible to say whether Brahm surrounds this creation or these elements mentioned in this verse surround Brahm. Even as the individual strands of thread lose their individuality when they are woven into the texture of the cloth or the carpet, it is impossible to separate the creation from the ingredients from which it is cast, and therefore it is also impossible to say which surrounds which. This is the 'Ati-Prahsna' or the question which has no conclusive answer that Gargi asked and Yagyavalkya refused to answer.

Brahm and Truth are matters beyond the realm of worldly logic as well as the cause and effect cycle. There are certain things that cannot be explained by logic and scientific deductions—e.g. we cannot ever explain how a cool breeze feels upon our faces, or how sweet is a sweet dish. It is futile to conjecture upon things that can be understood by experience and not by physical deductions and logic.

Brahm has been defined as that supreme transcendental enigmatic mystical entity which encompasses or surrounds everything that exists in this creation. Obviously, there is nothing beyond the symbolic abode where this supreme, transcendental Brahm resides. Gargi was just trying to have a showdown with Yagyavalkya by trapping him. That aspect of anything that cannot be described in words, and trying to prove it by mere logic is called 'Ati Prashna'; it is that question which goes beyond the limitations prescribed for asking sensible and answerable questions that are decent and worth asking and answering. Asking such absurd questions which have no certain or fixed answer that can be sustained and proved by logical methods to be truthful and irrefutable answers are categorised as those questions which should not be asked, because they are usually asked just to defeat the other person by asking irrational questions even though the person who is interviewing knows very well that they have no positive answer, and therefore are unanswerable. These questions are usually asked in debates just to defeat one's opponent, though the questioner is convinced that the question which he is asking has no answer. It is a speculative debate.

Yagyavalkya warned Gargi not to deviate from asking questions which are pertinent and have a rational answer, and not insist on asking questions about that Lord who is not understood even by the Vedas and other scriptures but can only be known by personal experience and witnessing. So such a Lord is obviously beyond the comprehension of other people, and he cannot be described merely by words, or by the method of cause and effect that can be physically verified and proved. Because such questions are speculative in nature, based on mere imagination, and cannot be logically proved or answered positively, such questions are deemed to be prohibited in debates.

But suppose Yagyavalkya had answered this question—what surrounds the Brahm Loka? What would he have answered?

Probably the answer would be this —Brahm Loka is the outer boundary of the cosmos which has no boundary, because it is infinite and measureless. There is nothing that exists beyond the Brahm Loka, because everything else exists within this Loka. When Brahm decided to enter the creation as its Atma, which is the microcosmic form of Brahm himself, the Brahm Loka virtually 'imploded', giving rise to the sub-atomic Atma. This phenomenon is akin to the explosion of giant stars and formation of 'black hole' in the universe. These black holes are so dense that not even light can pass through them; hence their name as 'black'. But since physics says that matter cannot be created, it can only change its form, then where would all that matter which consisted of the

exploding star go? The known universe is like an ‘hour glass’, wide at the two observable ends and millimeter wide at the center. The matter from one universe passes on or goes to another universe, and when the first universe has come to an end, a second parallel universe has already been formed. It is a continuous, never ending process. So when the Brahm Loka collapsed into itself, it was virtually a case of an inverted hour-glass. Another example is that of an inverted umbrella—outer surface turned inwards, and the inner surface turned outwards. Then the process was reversed when the right time came. That is why Brahm Loka cannot be explained in terms of what surrounds it and in what it is submerged.]

Canto 3 Brahmin 7

[This Brahmin narrates the interview of sage Yagyavalkya by Aruni Uddalak wherein the grand virtues of the supreme Atma are highlighted. This Brahmin has an uncanny resemblance to Canto 3, Brahmin 9 when the sage was interviewed by Shakalya, as well as to Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse nos. 2-13 known as Madhu Vidya.]

1. Next, Yagyavalkya was questioned by Uddalak, the son of Aruni, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! Once we were studying the ‘Yagya Shastra’, or the science, art and skill of doing various fire sacrifices, at the hermitage of Kapya Patanchal in the middle country called Madra Desh. His wife was possessed by a Gandharva. [See Brahmin 3 also.] We asked that Gandharva, ‘Who are you?’

He replied that he was the son of Atharva, and his name was Kabandh. Then he asked Kapya Patanchal and other scholars who were studying the sacrificial rituals— ‘Do you all know about that common thread or common factor or common denominator which ties or links or binds together the entire visible world, the world beyond this visible world (i.e. the invisible world), and the creatures that inhabit these worlds?’

Kapya Patanchal replied that he did not know it.

The Gandharva asked again, ‘Do you know that Antaryami, i.e. about that supreme, transcendental and divine Lord who resides inside each of these worlds and its creatures and controls them from within?’

Kapya Patanchal replied that he did not know him also.

The Gandharva, who had possessed his wife, then replied, ‘Oh Kapya! Anyone who knows about that common thread or common denominator or common factor that binds the worlds and all its inhabitants together as well as the supreme Authority which subtly resides inside these worlds and its creatures and regulates them from within, is deemed to be an expert on Brahm, on all the Lokas (worlds), on all the Gods (representing all the virtues and auspicious forces in creation), on all the Vedas (scriptures), on all the fundamental elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) and their manifestations as creatures, on the Atma (soul), and on the rest of existence. In short, he becomes all-knowing and enlightened’.

Then the Gandharva told them about that ‘Sutra’ (literally the secret formula, which is the common denominator binding all that exists together in a common thread, about which he had asked Kapya Patanchal in the beginning) and the supreme Authority that resides in the bosom of all living creatures. I know about that answer (because I was present there). Oh Yagyavalkya! If you do not know that secret formula, or the common thread which binds all the worlds and the creatures together, as well as about that supreme Authority that regulates all of them, and you dare to take away those cows reserved as a reward for those who are expert in the knowledge of Brahm (who is the supreme, transcendental Authority and the only almighty power in creation), then your head will fall down (i.e. you would have to bow in shame in this assembly)’.

Sage Yagyavalkya said confidently, ‘Oh Gautam (because Uddalak was born in the lineage of sage Gautam)! I certainly know about that ‘Antaryami’, or the Lord who resides in the bosom of all living creatures and controls them as well as the world in which they live from within. I also know about that ‘Sutra’ (the secret formula or the common thread) that binds all the creatures together’.

Uddalak said, ‘That anyone can say that I know this and I know that. Tell us what you know about’ (1).

2. Yagyavalkya said, ‘Oh Gautam (Uddalak)! That ‘Sutra’ (the common thread or the common factor) is the air/wind element, because this mortal world, the immortal world (such as the heaven) and its inhabitant creatures are threaded or stringed or tied together in a common strand by it. This is why it is commonly said that a dead man’s body has ‘fallen’, or that he has ‘left the body behind and it has dispersed into its elements’, because all the organs of the body are knitted together by this common element known as air/wind¹’.

Uddalak said, ‘Yes, this is alright. Now tell us about the authority known as Antaryami’ (2).

[Note—¹The *wind/air element* is called the Pran or life element of a man. The physical body is a composite of different organs, both external such as the organs of action and perception as well as internal organs of various functions. The *common factor* that unites them together is called Pran or life that is present inside the body. As soon as the man dies, his Pran (the vital winds that collectively control life) leaves his body, then the organs do not have a common factor which can keep them together and make them work in harmony and in coordination with each other, as a result of which the body collapses. For example, the legs won’t support the weight of the body, the hands won’t lift anything, the mouth would not open even to take the medicine, the internal organs such as liver, kidney, lungs and heart etc. would not coordinate their functions. As a result, the body simply collapses and begins to decay. Soon it would disintegrate into the fundamental elements such as earth, water, fire, air and sky and disperse in different directions. See also note to verse no. 2 of Brahmin 3 of this Canto.

This phenomenon can be explained differently also. When an animal is living, all its body parts are held together by its Pran or wind/air element, but when it is killed or when it dies, its body can be chopped up into different segments or parts and used for different purposes without the animal complaining at all. So we deduce that the animal’s body and

its parts are held together only by one factor called its 'life or Pran' which is synonymous with the wind or air element. Once this Pran leaves the body, it scatters into different parts or elements from which it was formed.

The common thread that links all forms of creatures in this creation is 'life' or 'Pran'. This Pran is a metaphor for life and a sort of acronym for all the vital winds that sustain life in creation.

There are other examples to explain this concept. When the thread of a garland is cut, all its flowers scatter on the ground. Similarly, when the thread of a necklace is cut, all its precious gems fall apart and scatter on the ground. Likewise, when the thread of a rosary is cut, it is dismantled and consequentially all the beads of that rosary fall apart and scatter on the ground. In the present case, all the different organs of the body are knitted together by the various vital winds present in the body, which are collectively called 'Pran'. As soon as the Pran leaves the body, the latter collapses and falls down on the earth. None of the organs are able to lift it. The Pran or the vital wind which helps an individual body to remain alive and interact with the world also helps other individuals to function in the same way. No one would have to do anything with a 'dead world'. See Canto 1, Brahmin 3 in this context.

So, the 'common thread' that binds all the creatures of this world together and help the world get its name as a 'living world' is the wind/air element. Similarly, this wind/air element pervades in the heavens and in the sky in a uniform manner. The sky is full of the wind/air element. All those creatures who fly in the sky, those who have the sky as their natural habitat, survive because of the wind/air element, because they cannot fly without the presence of this element in the sky as the air is needed to keep them aloft, and the wind to help them glide. Further, the spirit of dead ancestors is also in the form of the wind, as are all other Gods and semi-Gods who also survive in the heavens because of the wind/air element present in it in the form of their Pran which is the common thread which links the mortal creatures of the visible world with the immortal creatures of the invisible world in the heavens.]

3. Yagyavalkya replied, 'That which is present uniformly in the Earth element as an integral part of it, whose body consists of the earth element but the earth does not know about it, that which inherently and intrinsically resides in the earth element and regulates it from within—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul. It is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity, and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority, i.e. the Authority that lives within everything that exists, and which controls and regulates everything from the inside (3).

4. That which lives uniformly in the Water element as its integral part, that whose body is made of the water element, that which controls the water element from within but the water is unaware about who it is—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of

all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (4).

5. That which lives uniformly in the Fire element as its integral part, that whose body is made of the fire element, that which regulates the functioning of the fire element from within it but the fire is unaware of it or who it is—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (5).

6. That which lives universally in the Antariksha (the sky above the earth) and is diffused throughout it in a uniform manner, that whose body consists of Antariksha but the latter does not know about it, that which is present inside the Antariksha and regulates its functioning from within—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (6).

7. That which resides as an integral part of the Air/Wind element and is uniformly defused throughout it, that whose body consist of the air/wind element but the latter does not know about it, that which regulates the functioning of the air/wind from within it—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (7).

8. That which resides universally in the Duloka (the heavens) and is uniformly present in it everywhere, that whose body consists of the Duloka but the latter is not aware of it, that which is intrinsically present in the Duloka and regulates it from within—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (8).

9. That which lives in the Aditya (Sun) as its truthful identity (i.e. as its Atma or soul) and pervades throughout it uniformly (as its heat, light, energy and vitality), that which has that Aditya as its glorious, radiant and splendorous body externally visible, but is not known to Aditya though it is inherently and invariably present in the latter as its integral and inseparable part, and which regulates and controls the functioning of Aditya from within it—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the

ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (9).

10. That which universally and uniformly lives in all the Directions and pervades throughout them by being defused imperceptibly in every direction, that which is established in every direction, and these directions form the body of that sublime and majestic entity, that which regulates and controls the directions from within but the directions do not realise who is controlling them—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (10).

11. That which resides in the Moon and the Stars, that which uniformly permeates through those heavenly bodies, that which has those bodies as its body but the Moon and the Stars do not know about it, that which regulates their functioning and controls their movements by residing within them—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (11).

12. That which is established universally in the Akash (the sky element), permeating uniformly throughout it, that whose body is made up of the Akash (sky element), that which intrinsically lives within it as its integral and inseparable part, controlling and regulating it from within but the Akash is not aware of its presence or who or what that entity—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (12).

13. It is an integral part of Tama (darkness); the darkness representing Tama is its body (i.e. it is invisible). Though it pervades the darkness uniformly, the latter is unable to know who or what it is. [That is, the darkness is unable to realise that the factor which gives the darkness its quality of being dark is called the Atma.] But nevertheless, it controls and regulates darkness from within—that mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami authority which controls and regulates them from within (13).

14. That which lives inherently in the brightness and splendour of Tej, or the factor of Nature called 'energy, vigour and vitality', that which exhibits the dazzling brightness and radiant splendour which is so characteristic of energy as its body, that which pervades throughout this

factor known as Tej but the latter is unable to decipher who or what it is though it controls all the famous qualities that energy displays while residing within it—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (14).

15. That which resides and uniformly pervades in all the 'Bhuts' in creation (i.e. the primary elements such as earth, water, fire, air and sky and their manifestations as creatures); all the Bhuts form its body but none of them know about it; that which remains within the Bhuts and controls and regulates all their activities from within—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (15).

16. That which is inherently present inside the Pran (the vital wind known as breath) that sustains life in a living creature, that whose body consists of this Pran, that which controls and regulates all the different virtues, glories and activities of the Pran while staying within it as its integral part though the Pran does not realise its presence or about the force which is actually giving the Pran its characteristic drive and operating force as well as its importance and value—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (16).

17. That which intrinsically lives in the faculty of Speech and empowers it to speak, that whose body is manifested in the form of speech and the words spoken, that which lives in this faculty and regulates and controls it from within, that which is an integral part of the faculty of speech and the words spoken but the latter do not know anything about it (i.e. they are unable to describe it)—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (17).

18. That which is present in the Eyes and empowers the faculty of sight to see, that whose manifestation is the eye itself, that which lives in the eye and regulates and controls its functioning from within, that which lives within the eye but the eye does not know anything about it (i.e. the eye is unable to see it)—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity

and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (18).

19. That which is present in the Ears and empowers the faculty of hearing to hear, that whose manifestation is the ear itself, that which controls and regulates the functioning of the year by living inside it as its integral part but the ear is unaware of it or who it is—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (19).

20. That which resides in the Mana (mind and heart) of an individual and controls all its (Mana's) functions while comfortably ensconced in it and firmly seated inside it, that which is not known by the Mana though it resides within it, and that for which the Mana is a manifestation—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (20).

21. That which reside in the Skin of the creature as its constituent and integral part, controlling and regulating its function of touch and feel from within it, that which is an integral part of the skin but is not known by the latter (i.e. the skin is unaware of that entity's presence in it) though the skin is a manifestation of that entity, forming its body—that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (21).

22. That which lives in Vigyan (rational, logical and scientific knowledge; that knowledge which is not speculative and imaginative but based on sound reasoning and verifiable facts) and is an integral part of it, that which lends Vigyan its potentials, strength, vitality, glory, powers and authority, that whose body is Vigyan (i.e. Vigyan is a visible manifestation of that entity), that which is not understood by Vigyan though the latter is a manifestation of the former— that inexplicable, mysterious, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within (22).

23. That which resides in the Semen as its vital spark of life represented by the sperm so much so that it is even the vitality and vigour, the essential life-giving force of that sperm, that whose body is manifested as the semen, that which intrinsically resides as an integral part of the semen

and controls and regulates its stupendous powers of creating a new life form from within it but the semen cannot recognize it, or it is unaware of its presence though the sperm itself is a manifestation of that supreme, eclectic and mysterious entity—that inexplicable, mystical and enigmatic supreme entity which is indescribable and beyond comprehension is known as your Atma/soul; it is imperishable like the ambrosia of eternity and it resides in the bosom of all the creatures as the Antaryami Authority which controls and regulates them from within.

It is not seen, but it sees all; it is not heard, but it hears all; it is not a subject that can be comprehended or thought about, but it comprehends everything and thinks about all; it is unknown by itself, but it knows everything. Aside of it, there is no one else who sees, hears, thinks, ponders, comprehends and knows. It is your Atma that is imperishable, eternal, immanent and eminent. Besides this Atma, everything else is perishable’.

After this, Uddalak, the son of the Aruni, fell silent (23).

Canto 3 Brahmin 8

[This Brahmin describes the second round of questioning of Yagyavalkya by Gargi. She picked up the thread of questioning in the previous Brahmin 7 and tried to trap Yagyavalkya with two questions based on the latter’s own reply. The first round of questioning by her was done in Brahmin 6. At the conclusion of this second round, Gargi declared that Yagyavalkya was indeed undefeatable as far as the holistic and eclectic knowledge of the supreme transcendental Brahm was concerned.]

1. Then the hermitress known as Gargi, the daughter of Vaachknu, addressed the gathering— ‘Oh respected Brahmins! I shall ask him (Yagyavalkya) two more questions. If he can answer them then it would be certain that he cannot be defeated in metaphysical and theological debates concerning Brahm’.

The august assembly permitted her, saying— ‘Okay Gargi, go ahead with your questioning and ask (Yagyavalkya) your questions’ (1).

2. Gargi addressed Yagyavalkya, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! Just like a brave warrior of the two famous kingdoms of Kashi (Varanasi) and Videha (king Janak’s place) picks up a bow, strings it and mounts it with an arrow having the potential to cause horror for the enemy, I am also ready with two formidable and daunting questions for you. Give me their answers.’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Oh Gargi! Go ahead and ask’ (2).

3. Gargi Asked, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! That which is above the Duloka (heaven) and below the earth as well as right in the middle of it, that which is the Duloka and the earth themselves (i.e. these two are its manifestation), that which is the past, the present and the future personified—tell me what surrounds it, envelops it and submerges it from

all the sides, or completely warps and wefts through it in all the directions?’ (3).

[Note—Refer Brahmin 7, verse nos. 3 and 6 of this Canto above. This question is to enquire about the ‘habitat or dwelling place’ of that supreme entity which soaks everything from within and without. This is her first question to trap the sage. She wanted to see if Yagyavalkya gives two different answers, apparently contradictory to each other, regarding the same Truth when asked by two independent questioners who put the questions in two different ways. If the ‘truth’ is one, the answer would obviously be also one, and there would be no contradictions. So, what is that about which the sage is being asked about by Gargi here and was asked about by Uddalak earlier in Brahmin 7? The answer is ‘the Truth’, and what is that Truth? The answer is Brahm. This Brahm has certain unique characteristics—if it is to be the ‘truth’ it has to possess such qualities as being unequivocal, undisputable, indubitable, irrevocable, unqualified and immutable. This ‘truth’ is one wholesome indivisible entity which is infinite, imperishable, eternal, all-pervading, all-encompassing, subtle, sublime, microscopic, invisible but nevertheless present, beyond the reach of the gross and subtle body but verifiable by being within the reach of experience and witnessing, pure and pristine consciousness personified etc. The ‘truth’ itself is used to measure the truthfulness of other entities even as touchstone is used to test the purity of gold, but that ‘truth’ cannot be judged by other entities. The object of all metaphysical and theological questioning is that ‘truth’ known as Brahm. It is also known as Atma or soul because it is the ‘essence and life’ of everything that exists, the ‘pure and pristine’ form of all that exists. It is an active principle in the entire existence as its ‘consciousness’; it is the principal factor in creation without which the very foundation of creation would be untenable.]

4. Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Oh Gargi! That which is present above the Duloka and below the earth, that which has revealed itself as both of them, that which is a personification of the past, the present and the future—that supernatural and mysterious Being is uniformly defused throughout the Akash (the sky or space) element of creation; it is drenched and soaked in the sky element; it warps and wefts throughout the length and breadth of the sky element (4).

[Note--In other words, that invisible and mysterious entity about which you are asking me is surrounded on all the sides by the sky, it is submerged in the sky, and it submerges the sky in itself so much so that it is impossible to distinguish between the two. If you can fathom or measure the sky, you can also measure that entity, something which is an impossible proposition. Further, since it is not possible to ‘see’ the sky because the sky is invisible, it is also not possible to see that supreme and indescribable entity that is indistinguishably dissolved in the sky element and is present in it as its integral part. Therefore it displays all the characteristics of the sky or Akash element.]

5. Gargi said, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! I bow before you (or I salute you for your erudition). You have answered one of my two questions. Now answer the second question also’.

Yagyavalkya said, ‘Alright, so be it. Ask the question’? (5)

6. Repeating the same question again, Gargi asked, ‘That which is present above the Duloka as well as below the earth, that which is present in the middle of the two, and that which reveals itself in the form of the Duloka and the earth, that which is known as the past, the present and the future—say what submerges it, what soaks it, what wraps and wefts through it, what is the intrinsic part of it? (6).

[Note—Herein lies the trick of Gargi. She has already asked the same question in verse no. 3, so to repeat the question again had two intentions—one, to test the patience and confidence of Yagyavalkya, to check if he demurs and gets nervous at being asked the same question once again as if to suggest that his first answer was wrong and he is being given a second chance, and second, to see if he actually understands the essence, the basic and fundamental factor that underlines the object of the first question.]

7. Yagyavalkya said, ‘Oh Gargi! That which is above the Duloka and below the earth, that which is established in the middle of them, that whose revelation is the Duloka as well as the earth, and that which is known as the past, the present and the future—that inexplicable, supernatural, divine, eclectic, mysterious and supreme transcendental Authority is wrapped in the sky element; it is uniformly defused in the sky element; it forms an integral part of the sky element; it warps and wefts through the length and breadth of the sky element’.

(Gargi asked again—) ‘Then what is the sky wrapped in; what submerges this sky element; in what does this sky warps and wefts? (7).

[Note--Gargi is very unrelentingly cunning. In Brahmin no. 6, she had asked the same type of question, but was made to shut up by Yagyavalkya. So in this Brahmin she becomes stubborn, adamant to test the sage’s wisdom and the depth and width of his metaphysical and theological knowledge. She has reframed her questions, thinking that she would be able to trap Yagyavalkya this time. She appears to be well versed in the science of spiritualism because only a person who is very confident of what he is asking can be so persistent in interviewing his opponent. The questioning apparently appears to have reached a dead end, but Yagyavalkya was not to be out-smarted so easily.]

8. Yagyavalkya replied finally with characteristic charismatic confidence, ‘Oh Gargi! That element (which wraps the sky, in which the sky itself warps and wefts) is known as ‘Akshar’ (literally meaning that entity which is imperishable; the word Akshar also refers to a letter) by those who are expert in the knowledge of Brahm (i.e. the wise, learned and erudite Brahmins). That eclectic, esoteric, enigmatic, inexplicable, mysterious and majestic authority is supernatural and indescribable, for it is neither gross or macrocosmic nor subtle or microscopic; it is neither short or narrow nor long or broad (i.e. it cannot be measured); it is neither red like the fire element (i.e. hot and burning), nor in a fluid state like water indicating the virtues opposite of the fire element (such as being cool and calm); it is neither a shadow nor the darkness (because these two don’t have details, they don’t have life and validity of their own, they cannot be seen in the daylight symbolising knowledge); it is neither the wind or air element nor the sky or space element (because these two have an origin like other elements, but the entity we are talking about is eternal and without a birth

or beginning); and it is free from having any company (i.e. it is independent and one of its kind) as well as without any attachment or attractions of any kind towards anything.

It has no eyes (though it sees), no ears (though it hears), no speech (though it speaks), no Mana (mind and heart—though it thinks and feels and has emotions), no Tej (i.e. it has no visible light, radiance, splendour and evident display of energy, vitality and strength like the fire element), no Pran (life or breath—because it need not breathe to live and survive), no mouth (because it does not eat and speak), and no measurements (as it is beyond measurement, because it is infinite and eternal).

It has neither a within nor a without; it neither eats anything nor can it be eaten by anything or anybody (8).

[Note—This verse clearly establishes the uniqueness of Brahm. It is indeed a very strange, mysterious and mystical entity which is definitely beyond comprehension!]

9. Oh Gargi! Under the command and administration of this 'Akshar Brahm', which is the imperishable, eternal, infinite, all-pervading, almighty, omnipotent supreme transcendental Authority, are established the Sun, the Moon, the Duloka, the Earth, the Nimesh and the Muhurt (i.e. measurements of time, small and big), the Days and the Nights, the Half-month cycle of the moon, the full Month, the various Seasons, the Year etc. The different Rivers that emerge from the mountains meander their way either eastwards or westward under the order and administrative control of that supreme Authority.

Oh Gargi! It is under the command and inspiration of this almighty supreme Authority known as the Akshar Brahm that donors are praised for their magnanimity and noble heartedness by other people, the Gods repeatedly bless the Yajmaans (the chief patrons on whose behalf the religious fire sacrifices are done during which oblations are made to the Gods and they are worshipped) and accept the offerings made to them though they are able to sustain themselves by drinking the ambrosia of eternity called Amrit stored in the moon¹, and the spirits of the dead ancestors also accept the offerings made to them (9).

[Note—¹The Gods are generally very proud of the fact that they are not subject to death like ordinary mortals. This is because, according to the Purans, they had drunk the ambrosia of eternity called Amrit which is stored in the celestial pitcher called the moon. So, in order to remove their sense of pride and haughtiness, this overriding supreme authority known as Akshar Brahm compels them to survive on the food offered to the sacred fire during religious sacrifices even though they have drunk that Amrit. This is done by the supreme authority in order to ensure that the Gods do not outgrow their shoes, as it were. One can imagine the powers of that Authority whose command even the Gods do not dare to disobey.]

10. Oh Gargi! Those (ignorant and stupid) persons who do not attempt to realise or know about the essence of that entity known as 'Akshar', i.e. about the imperishable and eternal Brahm, and instead do numerous Yagyas (religious sacrifices) and suffer by doing sever Tapa (severe

austerities and penances, keeping of stern religious vows etc.) for thousands of years—all their efforts prove to be in vain.

Those who make their exit from this world (i.e. die) without realising that 'Akshar' (the supreme, transcendental, eternal and imperishable Truth known as Brahm), are indeed stingy minded and stingy hearted, and they die a lowly, stingy death¹.

On the contrary, those who depart from the world with full realisation about that Akshar Brahm, are indeed known as Brahmins (i.e. one who is well versed about the essential nature and truth of the supreme, sublime, divine, eclectic, transcendental, imperishable and infinite Brahm)² (10).

[Note--¹They are like a miserly man who loses a golden opportunity of doing profitable business because he does not wish to invest any money which he has in it, or lets his near ones die for lack of medical attention because he does not wish to spend for their medical treatment. Such people who do not realise the ultimate 'truth' that the object of such investment is for a long term gain, are indeed fools and ignorant ones, though it is desirable that adequate research should be done before investing the money.

Similarly, if a teacher is not liberal enough in his approach towards the truth of fruitlessness of elaborate rituals, simply because holding such exercises bring him great wealth in the form of donation without taking into consideration the greater welfare of the disciple by telling him the ultimate 'truth and aim' of such exercise, then such a teacher as well as the misguided pupil do not get the desired benefit of emancipation and salvation that they expect from these rituals. Both think that by merely involving themselves in costly and elaborate religious activities and doing severe Tapa they would get liberation and deliverance from this world, but they are ignorant of the reality.

It is like one searching for something in a hay stack without knowing what he is searching for, and how it looks. As a result, even if he sees it, he would not recognise it, and fruitlessly continue searching it till he becomes weary and tired.

²A person who is not only scholarly and erudite about the scripture but also enlightened and wise enough to be self-realised about the essential truth behind the magnificent façade of this world, one who understands the spirit and the essence of scriptural teaching about Brahm, only such a person is competent enough and eligible to be called a Brahmin. With this definition, anyone who is self-realised and knows the essential truth about the supreme authority that rules and regulates this creation fits in the bill of being called a Brahmin even though he might not be born as one.]

11. Oh Gargi! This 'Akshar' is not an object that can be seen or observed by the faculty of sight, but it sees or observes everyone and everything. It is not an object for the faculty of hearing to hear, but it hears all. It cannot be comprehended by the mind, and is beyond the emotional reach of the heart, but it thinks all, it comprehends all, it feels all. It is most mysterious, secret, enigmatic and esoteric; it is not known to anyone, but it knows everything and everyone.

Oh Gargi! The Akash or sky/space element is completely soaked, submerged, drenched, surrounded and infused by that Akshar Brahm which wraps it from all the sides as well as warps and wefts through it as

its integral, inseparable and indivisible part which is indistinguishable from it—i.e. both the Akash (infinite and eternal sky element) and the Akshar (the supreme transcendental authority known as Brahm) are indistinguishable and inseparable from one another’ (11).

12. At this answer, Vaachaknavi (Gargi) declared in the assembly—‘Oh assembled Brahmins! This is enough. It is better to bow and surrender before him (Yagyavalkya) and take your leave, for it is impossible for anyone amongst you to win over him or defeat him in any debate about Brahm. [That is, it is absolutely impossible to defeat Yagyavalkya in matters pertaining to theology, metaphysics and spirituality.]’

After that, she fell silent (12).

[Note—This Brahmin shows that Yagyavalkya was indeed competent and eligible to take away the cows set aside by king Janak as trophy for the debate. It also shows that in ancient India, even women were allowed to participate in such congregations and become judges to decide who the winner was. There was no question of caste or gender based chauvinism in those wise times.]

Canto 3 Brahmin 9

[This is a bit long Brahmin which describes the various questions asked by a sage named Shakalya who was very proud of his knowledge. He was instigated by other Brahmins who were peeved at being humiliated and intellectually trounced at the hands of Yagyavalkya, and therefore they wanted a showdown with him to settle scores, but did not have the necessary guts to do so personally. At the end, Shakalya suffered defeat and ignominy and his head fell down in shame. Thereafter, angry Yagyavalkya challenged the entire assembly to ask him questions singly or jointly, or he shall ask them, and they can answer his question singly or together. If they failed to answer him, they would have to meet the same end as that of Shakalya. But none dared. Finally, verse no. 28 presents the classic question that Yagyavalkya asked, drawing a parallel between a human body and a tree—even as a tree cannot take birth again if uprooted from its root, a man takes no birth after death if all his attachments with ignorance are cut off. Practically this last verse proves that it was known at that time that trees have life (a branch of science now known as botany) and that there is no life after the death of the body of a human being, a proposition that virtually debunks the theory of rebirth!]

1. Finally came the turn of Shakalya Vidagdha. He began the interview of Yagyavalkya by asking him—‘Oh Yagyavalkya! How many Gods are there?’

Yagyavalkya narrated the number of Gods as described in the various verses in honour of the Gods of the worlds, or the ‘Vishwa Devas’—three and three hundred, three and three thousand. This means the total number of Gods is three thousand three hundred and six’.

Shakalya said alright and asked again, ‘How many Gods are there?’

[We will now see that he will go on repeatedly asking the same question ‘how many Gods are there’ again and again. The implication of this repetition is that he wished to know the reverse progression by which all these Gods came into being.]

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘There are thirty three Gods’.

Accepting it, Shakalya asked again, 'How many Gods are there?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Six Gods'.

Shakalya asked, 'How many Gods are there?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'Three'.

Shakalya persisted, 'How many Gods are there?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'Two'.

Shakalya asked again, 'How many Gods are there?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'One and a half'.

Shakalya asked, 'How many Gods are there?'

Yagyavalkya finally replied, 'Only one'.

Shakalya accepted these figures as correct and then asked Yagyavalkya, 'Who are those three thousand three and three hundred three Gods?' (1).

[Note—The structure resembles an equilateral triangle or a pyramid, with the three thousand three hundred six Gods forming its base while the One supreme Being forming its apex. Since this kind of triangle has all the sides equal, it follows that no matter where we start, we reach the same conclusion—i.e. all the different scriptures and voluminous treatises may have different takes on this ultimate Truth, but basically there is no difference in what they speak.]

2. Yagyavalkya replied, 'These (three thousand three and three hundred three Gods) are merely semi Gods who represent or are manifestations of the stupendous glory, the majesty, the magnificence, the might, the authority, the powers, the grandeur, the excellence, and the importance and significance as well as the uncountable virtues and qualities of the actual God who number only thirty three'.

Shakalya asked, 'Which are these thirty three Gods?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'They are eight Vasus, eleven Rudras and twelve Adityas—they are the thirty one Gods. Taking into count Indra, the king of Gods, and Prajapati (Brahma, the patriarch and caretaker of creation), and the number comes to thirty three Gods' (2).

3. Shakalya asked, 'Who are these eight Vasus?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Agni (fire), Prithivi (earth), Vayu (wind/air), Antariksha (sky/space above the earth), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heaven; the space or sky beyond the solar sky), Chandra (Moon), and Nakshatras (stars)—these are the eight Vasus. The entire world is dependent on them and they sustain the entire world. That is why they are known as 'Vasus'—which refers to the essential landmarks of visible creation (3).

[Note—It would be noted that in order to sustain life in this world, all these things are needed. So those entities which are essentially needed to initiate, sustain, nourish, grow, develop and finally conclude life in this world are known as *Vasus*. The Supreme Being had taken these forms in order to sustain and rule over his own creation.

These eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond and a river, and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following-- Dhruv (ध्रुव), Dhar (धर), Som (सोम), Aap (आप), Anil (अनिल), Anal (अनल), Pratush (प्रत्यूष) and Prabhas (प्रभास).]

4. Shakalya asked, 'Which are the eleven Rudras'?

Yagyavalkya replied, 'The ten Prans¹ (five organs of action and five organs of action; also refers to the ten life sustaining winds in the body) present in a person along with the Atma² (representing the Mana or the intelligent mind and emotional heart) are the eleven Rudras³. They are called 'Rudra' because when, at the time of death, these Prans and the Atma leave the body, they make the person miserable and he cries (because no one wants to die) and at the same time his death causes his near and dear ones to also weep and wail in grief. Since they make the person as well as other people weep and wail in grief, or they become the cause of torments and miseries for all, they are known as 'Rudra' (because they show no mercy when they become angry and ferocious) (4).

[Note :- ¹These ten *Prans* have twin meanings—(i) They refer to the vital winds inside the body that sustain the functioning of its ten organs. The ten vital winds or Prans are the following—the five 'main' Prans or vital winds such as Pran, Apan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan, and the five sub vital winds or 'subsidiary or auxiliary' winds, such as Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdatta and Dhananjay. These ten winds and their functions are described in detail in (a) Maitrayanu-punisher, 2/7; (b) Jabal Darshan Upanishad, 4/23-24; (c) Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/77-87; and (d) Yogchudamani Upanishad, 1/21-24. (ii) The five organs of perception such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and the five organs of actions such as hand, leg, mouth, genital and excretory.

When a man dies, he suffers a lot because it is his natural urge not to abandon this body with which he has been enjoying this world and its comforts and pleasures all his life long. He has been nourishing and pampering this body throughout his life, and now when the time comes to abandon it at short notice, it is like one being dislodged from his own home which he had built with so much labour and then diligently decorated with his choicest of furniture and other decorative materials. His death causes his kith and kin to cry because he was their bread winner, and he had been sustaining and protecting them with all his might. It's a mutual relationship. This is where wisdom and self-realisation comes in—for a self-realised and enlightened man would not weep and let others not weep because he knows that his Atma is simply leaving his temporary abode of the gross and perishable body which was more like a snare trapping him just as a prisoner who is put under house arrest.

²The *Atma* or soul is the eleventh form of Pran or life present in the individual. It is often used simultaneously and synonymously with the word Pran, but whereas Pran resides in the nostril and other parts of the body as the vital wind element, the Atma is said to be a resident of the heart as the creature's pure consciousness. This Atma is the personification of the supreme Lord of the creation in his miniature form, and it dwells inside the body of the individual creature just like the supreme consciousness of creation pervades in the entire length and breadth of creation.

Both the Pran as well the Atma are used as synonyms for one another because both depend upon each other just like the two faces of a coin. Suppose a man has consciousness or Atma in him, but his physical organs are not functioning because of the failure of the vital winds present inside the body. Such a man would be technically conscious and living but for all practical purposes he is as good as dead, and the Atma present in his body would be of no use to either him or the world at large. Similarly, if a man's body is functioning properly but he has no 'soul', i.e. he is not conscientious, he has no scruples and morals, he is merciless and lacks compassion, he is vile and pervert, in short he 'lacks a soul' and the 'spirit of

auspiciousness and righteousness' in him, then also he is good for nothing as far as the society is concerned. Rather, such a 'soulless' man is like an animal. Similarly, a person who has no Pran is as good as deadwood. So we observe that both Pran and Atma co-exist harmoniously to make life worthwhile.

Since the Atma is also said to be a personification of Brahm, the supreme transcendental authority in creation, it is deemed that this Atma also resides in the head or the mind as the life or Pran of that organ where the faculty of thinking and intelligence are located in the body of the creature. According to the theory of creation as propounded by the Upanishads, the supreme Brahm had entered the body of the creature through the hair like slit on the top of the head, known as the 'Brahma Randhra', and established himself there. Brahma is a symbol of enlightenment and wisdom. That is why, of all the organs of the body, it is the mind that is said to be wise and intelligent. Since Brahm is the supreme authority of creation, this mind is also the sovereign authority of the setup known as the gross body of the creature.

³*Rudra*—(a) According to mythology, Lord Shiva has eleven forms called Rudras. They are the following:--(i) Mannu (मनु), (ii) Manu (मनु), (iii) Mahinas (महिनस), (iv) Mahaan (महान), (v) Shiva (शिव), (vi) Ritdwaj (ऋतुध्वज), (vii) Ugrareta (उग्ररेता), (viii) Bhav (भव), (ix) Kaal (काल), (x) Vamdeo (वामदेव), and (xi) Dhritvrat (धृतिव्रत). The eleven Rudras appear in Rig Veda 1/43/1, and Taittiriya Brahmin 3/4/9/7. They are regarded as the father of the Wind God or the Maruts (Rig Veda, 2/33/1). The word Rudra means one who is angry, terrible and wrathful. Amongst the Rudras, Lord Shiva is regarded as the most senior and enlightened.

(b) The eleven Rudras according to Vishnu Puran (1/1/15) are the following— Har (हर), Bahuroop (बहुरूप), Trayambak (त्र्यम्बक), Aparajeet (अपराजित), Shambhu (शम्भु), Vrishakapi (वृषाकपि), Kapardi (कपर्दी), Raivat (रैवत), Mrigvyadh (मृगव्याध), Sharva (शर्व), Kapaali (कपाली).]

5. Then Shakalya asked, 'Which are the twelve Adityas¹ (mythological suns)'.

Yagyavalkya replied, 'There are represented by the twelve Months in a year². These represent those twelve Adityas because these months move on, taking along with them the age of all the creatures of the world (5).

[Note—¹The *twelve Adityas*—There are many versions describing these twelve Adityas or mythological Suns as follows--(a) The twelve Adityas are the mythological Suns and appear as patron Gods who (i) take care of the world (Rig Veda, 2/27/4); are like the heads (Taittiriya Brahmin, 1/2/3/3) and eyes (Jaimini, Uttar. 2/1/2/3) of all the creatures. These twelve Adityas appear first in the Rig Veda 1/41/4-6 and 2/27. They are the sons of Aditi, the mother of Gods (Atharva Veda, 8/9/21). They are the following— the eight Vasus + Indra + Sun + Vishnu + Shiva = twelve in number.

(b) According to Vishnu Puran, the twelve Adityas are the following— Dhata (धाता), Arayma (अर्यमा), Mitra (मित्र), Varun (वरुण), Ansha (अंश), Bhug (भग), Indra (इन्द्र), Vivaswan (विवस्वान), Pusha (पूषा), Parjanya (पर्जन्य), Twashta (त्वष्टा) and Vishnu (विष्णु).

(c) Sun God or Surya—appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/50. He is one of the chief Gods that sustain life. He is closely related to the Fire God; the Sun is a visible manifestation of the fire element. The sun is regarded as the 'eye' of the Viraat Purush. The Sun God watched the deeds done by all the creatures (Rig Veda, 1/50/2). It is like the Atma of all the creatures (Rig Veda, 1/115/1; Shatpath Brahmin, 14/3/2/9).

The Taittiriya Brahmin, 1/1/9/1 however gives the name of only *eight Adityas* — (i) Mitra, (ii) Varun (iii) Aryaman (iv) Ansha (v) Bhag (vi) Dhaata (vii) Indra, (viii) Vivaswan.

‘Aditya’ or the Sun God appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/41/4-6; 2/27; 8/47/14-18; 10/185; Sam Veda—395; 397; Yajur Veda—23/5; 34/54; Atharva Veda—5/3/9-10; 16/3.

² By saying that these Adityas are like the *twelve months*, Yagyavalkya means two things. First, with the passage of one complete year, a corresponding number of years are subtracted from the total number of years that a person is supposed to live in this world. That is, death comes so much the nearer to him. The passage of the sun across the sky from dawn to dusk is used as a symbolic way of depicting the passage of the life of a man from his birth till his death. Since there are twelve mythological suns and twelve months in a year, a parallel is drawn between them and the life of a man.

Second, the whole life of an individual creature as well as the entire creation as a whole depends upon the various seasons that appear in a year. If even one of the seasons is disturbed, the entire cycle of life is disturbed correspondingly. For the smooth functioning of life, all the seasons must appear in a rhythmic and systematic manner, and it is a scientific fact that the seasons, upon which the life on earth is so dependent, also themselves depend upon the sun. That is why the Adityas are termed as being synonymous with the twelve months of the year as well as with the life cycle of creation.]

6. Then Shakalya asked his next question, ‘Who is Indra¹ and who is Prajapati?’²

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Electric or lightening in the cloud (Stanyitnu)³ is Indra, and fire or religious sacrifices (Yagya) is Prajapati⁴’.

Shakalya asked, ‘Who is Indra?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Ashani⁵’.

Shakalya asked again, ‘What is Yagya⁶?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The animals⁷’ (6).

[Note—¹*Indra* derives his name from ‘Indri’ meaning the sense organs of the body—five organs of perception and five organs of action. The vital functions and the virtues of each of these organs are personified as a ‘God’, and the authority who controls them is their Lord called ‘Indra’. Indra is a metaphor for, or a personification of the combined virtues and characteristics that define all these organs and their functioning. Being at the helm of affairs, Indra is like the King or Emperor of all the other personified forces and powers of creation.

At the macro level of creation he is like the supreme Brahman who is the Lord of all that exists, while at the micro level of the individual creature he is like the Atma (pure consciousness) and the Pran (the vital winds that sustain life inside the body).

The various functions that the organs perform inside the body of the creature are represented by their own set of patron Gods who personify these functions and the various qualities of these individual organs. Since *Pran*, the vital winds present in the body that govern its functioning, is at the core of life in a creature’s body, it is like Indra at the micro level.

Since the heart is at the core of life of a man, the central authority that regulates all these Gods is also said to have its seat in the heart. That authority is the emperor of the body and its organs, and it is known as the Atma. Therefore, this *Atma* is also like Indra as far as the individual creature is concerned.

According to Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 6 of this Upanishad, this Indra is a synonym for *Brahman* both at the macro level because Brahman is the supreme Lord of the entire creation represented by the innumerable forces of Nature called the various Gods at the macro level (and that is why we have so many Gods), as well as at the micro level of the

individual creature because the Pran is the vital life supporting entity present in the body without which none of the organs would have their relevance, as well as the Atma or pure consciousness without which even this Pran would lose its importance.

The king is offered the best of foods and drinks that are available in his kingdom. So this Indra God is also offered the best food and drink in the form of the ambrosia called 'Som'. It is an invigorating drink that is extracted from a creeper by the same name. It is used during sacrificial rituals, and it is offered to Gods that is supposed to bestow them with an eternal life of bliss. It is said to be stored in the heavenly pitcher of the moon. From the metaphysical point of view, since Indra represents the superior authority that controls all the other Gods representing the various sense organs, it follows that whatever the organs acquire are first offered to Indra before the other Gods representing these organs partake of it. Amongst the organs, it is the hand that helps the body to acquire things from the outside world. Since the organs have an intrinsic tendency to move towards pleasing things in this world and move away from unpleasant things, it is deemed that their messenger, the hand, brings to them only selected and best of things available, which is like bringing Amrit or Som for them so that they can offer it to their king Indra.

Indra is both the 'Atma' of the living being because the latter is the undisputed emperor of the body as its consciousness, as well as the 'Pran' or the various vital winds present in the body that control all its vital functions and sustain life.

According to the Rig Veda, 1/ 4-5; 51-57, Indra represents the combined forces of Nature represented by the different Gods. He loves to drink Som, the elixir of bliss and eternity (Rig Veda, 3/ 36/ 8). He has the Wind God called Marut as his chief assistant.

Indra appears in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—1/4-5, 51-57; 5/29; 7/19-32; 8/15-17; 10/111-113; Sam Veda—52/115-148 etc.; Yajur Veda—3/34; 7/5; 7/39; Atharva Veda—8/8; 20/1.

²*Prajapati*—Prajapati is the manifestation of the supreme cosmic transcendental creator Brahm, in the form of Prajapati Brahma, the creator. Prajapati Brahma, the patriarch of the creation, has certain characteristic qualities which are exclusive to him and which make him the nearest analogue to Brahm, the Supreme Being who is the Supreme Soul of the cosmos. Prajapati Brahma has the power to create and control destiny—and therefore he virtually decides the time of annihilation or death of the world, though the actual task of annihilating or ending this world or causing death is delegated to Lord Shiva, but the mandate to do so comes from the supreme authority, who is not Brahma but Brahm, but the former has been delegated this authority by the latter. Brahma unfolded the world when he turned his head in the four directions and uttered the four basic words Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha and Maha (symbolising the creation of the earth, the sky, the heavens and the great creation having countless varieties and numbers of creatures, small and big, who would populate it) as well as the Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sam and Atharva) and the profound body of wisdom and knowledge contended in them. (See Mahopanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 9 of the Sam Veda tradition).

Knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment are the chief characteristic of Brahm represented by the Atma/soul. Prajapati Brahma also has these characteristic features because he is the one who has not only created the

physical world but also the great body of knowledge in the form of the Vedas.

Prajapati Brahma is depicted as a white-bearded and learned grandfather of creation. This is a symbolic way of saying that he is the oldest and wisest one amongst all those who live. Even Vishnu and Shiva and all the other Gods are much younger to him. Both the two Gods (Vishnu and Shiva) are known to exhibit some elements of Rajoguna and Tamogunas, i.e. they have some sort of worldly characteristics such as showing anger, having passion etc. or assuming different forms as in the case of their various manifestations, but Brahma, the old bearded patriarch, remains one original without any manifestation, much like the supreme Brahm who remains detached from and dispassionate towards the creation, although he is the cause of it, is responsible for it and is the resting place for it.

The four words pronounced by Brahma created the four basic components of the cosmos —The four mouths of Brahma symbolise the four cardinal directions of the compass and the preaching of the four Vedas symbolising knowledge, erudition and wisdom.

There is another interpretation of the word *Prajapati*. Brahma the creator is also called 'Swayambhu', The word Swayambhu means 'self-existent' and refers to Brahm, while 'Swayambhu Manu' is Brahma, the Prajapati or the Lord and sustainer of the subjects of this creation, in his manifested form as the human being; he is a representative of the Male aspect of creation, the Viraat Purush, and is primal male par excellence; he is the divine father of the human race. The name 'Manu Swayambhu' is especially applied, in the context of the Purans of which Ramayan is a part, to fourteen successive mythical progenitors and sovereigns of the earth and who create and sustain this world through successive long period of time called 'Kalpas'. The first such mythical progenitor is known as 'Manu Swayambhu' as the one who sprung (created or manifested) from the self-existent Brahm. He is regarded as a secondary creator who commenced his work of creating by producing 10 Prajapatis, of whom the first was 'Light' called Marichi. To this Manu is ascribed the celebrated code of conduct called 'Manu Smriti' and two other ancient Sutra work on Kalpa and Grihya, i.e. the sacrificial and domestic rituals. He is also known as Hiranyagarbha and Prachetas.

The other five Manus are called Swarochish, Uttam, Taamas, Raivat and Chakshush. The 7th Manu is called Vaivasvata Manu the son of the Sun God, and he is regarded as the progenitor of the present race of living beings. He is like the Noah of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, is said to have been preserved by Vishnu or Brahm in the form of the legendary great fish from being drowned in the great deluge of the dooms day. This Manu is also called as one of the twelve Adityas, the author of Rig Veda, VIII, 27-31, as the brother of Yam (the God of death and a judge of a creature's deeds done by it during the life time), as the founder and first king of Ayodhya, and as the father of Ila who married the son of the Moon-God named Budha. This makes two great dynasties—the solar and the lunar races to which Sri Ram and Krishna respectively belonged —related to each other. The 8th Manu, or the 1st of the future Manus according to Vayu Puran, III, 2, will be Savarni, the 9th would be Daksha Savarni, the 10th would be Brahm Savarni, the 11th would be Dharma Savarni the 12th would be Rudra Savarni, the 13th would be Raviya or Deva Savarni, and the 14th would be Bhautya or Indra Savarni. The life of one Manu is equivalent to roughly 311,040,000 years.

³The word *Stanyitnu* means one that thunders, rumbles, crackles, reverberates and roars—the characteristic features of the clouds that give rain during the rainy season. It also means the thunder clap of lightening in the clouds. Since Indra is regarded as the controller of rains and the clouds, and is generally referred to as the ‘Rain God’, the word also refers to Indra. All clouds that pour down heavily and are accompanied by loud thunder and rumbling have stabs of lightening streaking through them, and it appears as if the Indra God is wielding his weapon known as Vajra or the thunderbolt to instill fear in the heart of evil ones.

⁴*Prajapati*—Fire sacrifices are likened to Prajapati Brahma because the fire sacrifice has the potential and powers possessed by the latter. These sacrifices provide food for the Gods, i.e. they provide nourishment and sustenance to the forces of Nature which support life in this creation, a specialised function of Prajapati. The word ‘Prajapati’ means one who is the guardian and care taker of the subjects of creation much like a king who takes care of his subjects.

⁵The word *Ashani* means strength, power and punch. The Vajra of Indra, or the thunderbolt, is the symbolic formidable weapon of the supreme authority of creation that uses it to exert his authority and control the creation in the guise of Indra. The word also refers to the ‘fire’, specially that fire which is a characteristic strength and fundamental feature of electric. It is well known that when the lightening strikes it causes fire and will char to ashes anything upon which it falls.

⁶*Yagya* or the fire sacrifice has two components—fire and sacrifice. The ‘fire’ element or aspect of the Yagya is symbolically represented by Ashani or the inherent fire present in natural lightening, while the ‘sacrifice’ component is represented by the ⁷*animal* because traditionally animals were sacrificed during such Yagya rituals. Then how come Prajapati Brahma is linked with a Yagya? According to the genesis of creation, he did a symbolic fire sacrifice in order to start the cosmic cauldron (Mudgalo-punisher, canto 2 of the Rig Veda tradition) in which Brahma was asked by the Viraat Purush, the supreme macrocosmic Lord from whom Brahma himself was created, to offer the latter’s body as a symbolic sacrificial animal in the fire pit representing the Viraat Purush. This sacrifice was only symbolic, but it establishes the fact that one has to sacrifice oneself or suffer hardship or take great pains if one hopes to achieve any great accomplishment.

This ‘sacrificing of animals’ is only symbolic in nature, because these animals are the representatives of all the lowly, mean, evil, sinful and pervert characters as well as ignorance and lowly instincts present in a creature that have to be burnt or sacrificed in the sacrificial fire in order to make the creature pure, holy and divine. This would ensure its spiritual progress and bring to the fore the pristine pure and glorious nature of its Atma which has been tarnished by the soot created by delusions, and has therefore lost its inherent shine and lustre.]

7. Shakalya asked, ‘Who are the six Gods?’ [See verse no. 1.]

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Agni/Fire, Prithivi/Earth, Vayu/Air, Antarkisha/Sky, Aditya/Sun, Duloka/Heavens—there are the six Gods. These six Gods are the Vasus (mentioned in verse no. 3) excluding the Moon and the Stars. The thirty three Gods (mentioned in verse no. 2) are deemed to be incorporated in these six Gods (7).

[Note—As has been pointed out earlier also, all these Gods are nothing else but the various functions of Brahm and his glories personified. Here, the ‘fire’ represents his stupendous energy, vitality, heat and life sustaining potentials; the ‘earth’ represents his magnificent abilities to provide nourishment to all forms of life that exist as well as to bear them all with fortitude and compassion; the ‘sky’ symbolises his all-pervading and all-encompassing virtues as well as the quality of being endless and infinite; the ‘sun’ stands for his evident light, splendour and radiance; and the ‘heaven’ symbolises his exalted stature much like the citadel where the emperor lives.]

8. Shakalya asked, 'Who are the three Gods?' [See also verse no. 1.]

Yagyavalkya replied, 'The three Lokas¹ are representative of the three Gods; these Lokas symbolise these Gods'.

Shakalya asked, 'Who are the two Gods'.

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Anna (food) and Pran (the vital wind that keeps the body alive; that which helps one to eat that food, digest it and distribute its nourishment throughout the body, and finally ejecting the residual matter from the body)²'.

Shakalya asked, 'Who are those one and a half Gods'.

Yagyavalkya replied, 'That which flows (i.e. the wind)' (8).

[Note--¹There are two interpretations of this answer. According to one theory, the three *Lokas* or worlds are Bhu, i.e. the earth, Bhuvaha, i.e. the sky just above the earth, and Swaha, i.e. the heaven or the sky of the solar system. According to another theory, the first God is a combined form of earth and fire, the second God represents the sky and air element, and the third God stands for space and the sun. We will note here that all these elements—the earth, the fire, the sky, the air, the sky and the sun are the fundamental factors or aspects upon which this visible creation is based. If even one of them is not there, it is impossible to imagine life. The earth is like the crucible which harbours life, the fire gives it energy and warmth, the air gives it life in the form of breath, the sky is where everything that exists, including the earth, fire, air and the sun, live, and which gives the creature the necessary space to grow and develop, and the sun provides light and heat besides controlling the seasons. Refer Canto 2, Brahmin 5 called the Madhu Kand as well as Brahmin 1 of the same Canto describing the dialogue between sage Balaki and king Ajatshatru in this context.

²*Food* and *Pran* are obviously the two vital ingredients of life. They are like two sides of the same coin because food contains the vital nutrients that sustain life in all mortal creatures. Even the seemingly immortal Gods depend upon the offerings of food made during fire sacrifices to find their nourishment. No living creature can survive without food, and no food would be of any use to that creature without the presence of Pran or life in the form of the vital wind inside its body because it is these vital winds that help the body to take in food, digest it, extract its nourishment and distribute it throughout the body so that all the organs are equally sustained, and the elimination of waste matter from the body.

In fact, it must be realised here that life in any form is very dependent on food. The food is like the Atma or soul of all living creatures because they can't survive without it, as much as the fact that they can't survive without Pran. So, these two entities are honoured as Gods of creation. Both food and Pran are honoured as 'honey' vis-à-vis the creature, because they are the most necessary elements of creation for the latter. They are symbolically as sweet and invigorating as honey for all living beings. They are the best thing to happen for the creature.

The Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, in its section 7, sub-section 9 and section 6, sub-section 7 elaborately describes the importance and value of food to sustain life. This Upanishad has been published separately in this series in the volume dealing with the Upanishads of the Sam Veda.]

9. Shakalya enquired—'It is said here that the air flows or moves uniformly, and it pervades everywhere uniformly. It does not need any help to flow or move. Then how come it is 'one and a half' when the rest of the Gods are recognised by a single digit'.

Yagyavalkya answered this paradoxical question thus—'Because of the fact that the entire living creation is dependent upon the air or wind element for their sustenance, growth and development, for their very life and existence. Naturally therefore it has greater honour, greater importance, greater significance and an exalted

stature amongst the plethora of Gods, and to signify its superior position it is honoured by placing it on a pedestal higher than the other Gods. So if the other Gods are recognised by single digits, the Vayu or the Wind God or the air element is assigned a digit slightly higher than the rest to indicate its special stature¹.

Shakalya then asked—‘Then, who is the One God?’ [See verse no. 1.]

Yagyavalkya replied— ‘Pran. It is called Brahm. It is called ‘Tatt’ (i.e. that) (9).

[Note--¹The *air* element is superior to the other elements; it is more important and vital than the other elements. For example, the fire element can sustain itself only till the time it gets air, and as soon as it is exhausted of air, the fire is extinguished. Further, a fierce gust of wind or a severe storm can blow out even a widely raging fire, and a softer wind can easily blow out the candle. The rain bearing clouds would not be able to move without wind and take the much needed rains or water to distant corners of earth; the earth would be a lifeless arid and barren landscape if there was no air or water in it; and the sky element would be lifeless vacuum also without the presence of air/wind in it.

So, in addition to its basic virtue of flowing or moving or blowing, the air exercises control over and influences the functioning of all the other elements of Nature. The Gods are none other but personifications of the principle characteristics, virtues and qualities of these fundamental elements of creation. Therefore the air/wind element represented by the Wind God is honoured by an exalted title which makes it stand out amongst all other Gods and makes it superior to them. Hence it is honoured by the title of *one and a half* which symbolically says that it is superior to the other Gods in its importance, significance, authority, powers and potentials.

²The one ultimate God is synonymous with *Pran*. It is called ‘that’ or *Tatt* because it refers to ‘that’ ultimate entity which is the only one and the ultimate Truth in creation, and it is known as *Brahm*.

‘Pran’ is synonymous with life and consciousness, it embodies all the essential forces of life, including the vital wind/air element as well as the Atma/soul of the creature, and therefore it is deemed to be synonymous with Brahm who is the ultimate, supreme and transcendental authority of creation, the only and the ultimate Truth and the absolute Reality of creation, and the ‘essence of life’ of creation. ‘It is *that*’ something which is verifiable by experience and witnessing, it is visible in the form of this vast cosmos that is proved and verified. In short, it is the single entity called the Pran or Atma that has revealed itself in myriad and divergent forms, starting from the one and the half to two, three, six, thirty three and extending up to three thousand three hundred six Gods. How do the numbers matter? It is the same entity known as Brahm that has multiplied itself many times over to reveal the multifarious form in which this vast creation exists. If taken in its basic form, therefore, this creation would revert back to only ‘one entity’ known as Brahm.

Another way to understand this is to extend a dot to an infinite line; when that line is traced back to its origin, it comes back to that dot. In this example the ‘dot’ is Brahm, while the ‘infinitely extended line’ is the creation. The basic operating factor that defines all the numerous variations in which the Gods exist in this creation is ‘Pran’ simply because the Gods are ‘living entities’, or ‘living personifications’ of certain qualities and virtues of creation. The Gods are ‘living conscious manifestation’ of the different virtues present in this creation, or the Pran and Atma of creation. These Gods represent the different names, functions, virtues, qualities, powers, potential, authority etc that the same Pran or Atma or Brahm takes in order to create, sustain and finally conclude this multifarious creation which is like the unfolding of and then folding back of the canvas known as creation.]

10. [Verse nos. 10--17 describe the eight forms that supreme transcendental cosmic consciousness known as Brahm and its macrocosmic gross manifestation known as the

supreme Purush has taken in this visible world. These verses have a close resemblance to the conversation between king Ajatshatru and Balaki in Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 2-13; to Canto 2, Brahmin 5 known as Madhu Vidya Brahmin; to Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse nos. 3-23 in which sage Uddalak interviewed Yagyavalkya; and Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse nos 1-7 which describes the conversation between sage Yagyavalkya and king Janak.]

Shakalya said, ‘He whose resting place or residence or mansion or dwelling (Ayatan) is this earth (i.e. he resides in the earth element), whose faculty of sight (Loka) is the fire (i.e. his eye is the fire element, because it sees through it), and whose light or illumination (Jyoti) is the Mana (mind and heart) (i.e. he thinks, ponders and contemplates, he researches, deduces and makes conclusions, he visualises, imagines and decides, he makes various aspirations, volitions and desires, he creates numerous expectations and ambitions through the faculty of mind and intellect, he creates numerous emotions and attachments through the involvement of the heart)—that supreme transcendental Purush¹ (Lord) is the ultimate resting place of the Atma or soul of all the creatures, and is therefore called ‘Sarwa-Atma’, i.e. the supreme all-pervading Atma or the cosmic Soul which is the ultimate resting place of all the individual souls present in individual creatures of the whole creation, and hence is the only and ultimate succour and resting place of all that exists. Oh Yagyavalkya, one who knows or is well acquainted with that supreme Purush or Lord is indeed called an expert in the knowledge which pertains to Brahm. [Do you know about him?]

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘I indeed know about that Brahm. That Purush whom you define or recognise as being the Atma or soul of all the creatures, and who is their eternal support, solace and succour, who is their foundation and basis, who is their ultimate resting place and dwelling, is indeed the one who lives in this individual body, who pervades uniformly in this body. In other words, this body of the creature is a visible manifestation of the cosmic Purush, and he lives in it as its Atma or pure consciousness. Oh Shakalya! Now ask more (i.e. something else)’.

Shakalya asked, ‘Who is the patron deity or God of that Purush?’.

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Amrit² (ambrosia of life; nectar that sustains and nourishes life) is the patron deity or God’ (10).

[Note—¹The *Purush* is the Viraat Purush who is the cosmic gross body of the supreme transcendental consciousness of creation known as Brahm. According to Vedanta, there are two planes of existence of creation—one is the cosmic or macro level, and the other is the individual or micro level at the stage of the individual creature which is like the basic unit of the cosmos. At the cosmic level, Brahm or pure ‘Transcendental Consciousness’ has the gross body called Viraat Purush, a subtle body called Hiranyagarbha, and a causal body called Ishwar. Their counterparts at the micro level of the creature are the following—the gross body is called Vishwa (the visible world), the subtle body is called Taijas, and the causal body is called Pragna or Pragya.

At the time of creation, the invisible Viraat Purush had transformed himself into a visible creature (i.e. man), and the cosmic consciousness called Brahm or Ishwar or Lord therefore transformed into what is known as the Atma of this individual creature.

This Atma resides in the gross body of a creature which is essentially made up of the *earth* element much like a clay pot. Since this Atma is the supreme Purush or Brahm personified, the gross body of a creature is considered as the Purush’s abode. The Atma or pure consciousness has no physical eyes, and its subtle eye is the *fire* element; it sees through it. The heart, mind and intellect complex (i.e. the subtle body of the creature called its Mana) is like its ‘light’ because this Atma is enlightened about this world through this medium and it works through this medium. It thinks,

ponders, contemplates, researches, arrives at various conclusions, takes decisions and imagines everything through this medium of the Mana; indeed it is the *Mana* that provides illumination and insight to the Atma, and it is this Mana that attaches the Atma to this world.

That is, that Purush personified as the Atma of the creature uses the mind and intellect as well as the heart, i.e. the 'Mana', to guide it as to what and what not to do. The 'fire' of life present inside the body gives it energy to see and think. The 'earth' moulded as its body, of course, is the habitat of that Atma.

²The *Amrit* here refers to the nutrition derived by the body from eating food. It is the nutrition and energy of the food that sustains life in the form of Pran in the body of the creature which enables it to provide the Atma with its habitat. Both the male sperm and the female egg derive their life-giving energy from the food eaten by the father and the mother respectively. The embryo gets nourishment and develops as a result of the nourishment derived from the food eaten by the mother. Right from birth of the creature till its death, it is the nourishment derived from the food that acts like the ambrosia or nectar that sustains life in the body of the creature.

Therefore, this 'Amrit' or the nourishment that is derived from the food eaten by the creature and flowing through its body in a fluid form through the medium of its blood, lymph, digestive juices, mucous, semen, etc. is symbolically the deity of the living being (Purush as the living creature) because without this Amrit it cannot survive. Refer verse no. 8]

11. Shakalya said, 'He whose body or dwelling place or location (Ayatan) is symbolically represented by Kaam (literally meaning worldly desires, yearnings, lust, passions--i.e. one who enjoys and has desire to remain engrossed in subjects dealing with worldly passions, lust and sensual gratification), he whose Loka is the heart (i.e. who lives in the heart and sees everything through the emotional and sentimental perspective of the heart), he whose light or illumination (Jyoti) is represented by the mind (i.e. who thinks with his emotional mind, as opposed to the intellectual mind), and who is the Atma or soul of all the creatures¹—a person who knows that supreme transcendental cosmic all-pervading Atma of creation which is the Transcendental Consciousness called 'Sarwa-Atma' or the personification of all the individual souls in this creation, is indeed the one who is well versed about Brahm. [Do you know about him?]

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Yes, sure I know about him. I indeed know about that supreme Purush. He whom you call or describe as the Atma of all the creatures is the Purush in the form of Kaam (various yearnings, ambitions, desires and passions regarding worldly matters which are inherent in a man and form an un-avoidable integral part of his basic character). Oh Shakalya! Ask something more'.

Shakalya asked, 'Who is his patron deity (i.e. whom does he worship, adore and admire)?

Yagyavalkya answered, 'Women²' (11).

[Note--¹It is a natural habit or tendency of a man to be attracted towards and have a passionate desire for a woman due to the simple principle of Nature that opposites attract each other. A lustful, sensual, libidinous and passionate man's entire thought process, his attention, his mind and heart, all his actions and deeds are woman-centric. His life seems to be revolving around a woman. So he lives and virtually dies for a woman; the woman is his world; it is for her that he acts and does anything, it is she who gives him peace and solace, and he finds comfort in the company of a woman.

Hence, *Kaam* is like his 'Ayatan' or dwelling place because a passionate person always spends his time thinking about matters that fall within the purview of the definition of Kaam. He finds permanent rest and peace while thinking of Kaam; he

virtually lives his life in the realm of Kaam; his mind and heart 'live' in the thought of Kaam; his entire being is devoted to pleasing the basic instinct of Kaam.

Since such a person sees everything with an emotional and sentimental perspective, and since the *heart* is the site where the Atma lives and it is also the site which controls such emotions and sentiments as love and passions, it is deemed to be his 'Loka'—i.e. it is both the place where the Atma of such a man lives as well as the 'window or glass' through which this Atma, which by the way is the true identity of the man, sees everything. It should be noted here that the word 'Loka' has twin meaning here—one is 'abode' and other is 'to see'. That is, the Purush personified as Kaam lives in the heart of a man; it is the heart where passions find their abode and resting place; it is from the heart that Kaam extends its tentacles to reach out to those objects in this world which help to gratify the sensual instinct of the man.

But to think about a woman and fancy about her, he needs the help of the *mind*, so it is his 'light' or Jyoti. This is because it is the mind that first 'enlightens' him or makes him aware that there is an attractive object known as a woman that can satisfy his carnal desires for sensual gratification and lust. The mind is the faculty that controls the various organs of perceptions through which the man gets passionate and lustful, and then it is the mind that helps him to implement his desires and passions through the organs of actions. In other words, it is the mind which tells the Purush that a woman is present, it is the mind that directs him to divert his attention from other subjects to a woman or any other thing which can gratify his sensual intents; it is the mind which helps him to enjoy and get pleasure from thoughts of a woman and other sensual objects.

And this attraction for a woman and desire for sensual gratification is inherent in a man; to be passionate, to have desires and yearnings is an intrinsic part of the character of a man, it is invariably present in all men in a lesser or greater degree. It appears that the Atma which resides in the heart of a man as his true identity is qualified with this attribute of Kaam, making it conditioned, and then it appears that the identity of the Atma or Purush is this 'Kaam'.

²Whom does this Atma of a man who is passionate and lustful worship and adore? It is a woman! It is all those things that can satisfy his lust and libidinous passions. So for such a lustful and passionate man the woman is like a 'God' whom he worships; the woman is the center of his life, the focus of his attention, and the object of his worship and admiration. So we observe that the Atma we are dealing here is a 'conditioned' Atma. Naturally, this conditioning robs the Atma of its pure nature and prevents the Atma from portraying its truthful form.]

12. Shakalya said, 'He whose symbolic residence, or a dwelling place, or resting place (called Ayatan) in this creation is in the form of different shapes, forms, contours, figures and other external features (called Roop) that exist in this visible world (i.e. he who has his presence felt in this world in the form of all visible features in it), he whose Loka is the eye (i.e. who sees these external features of the world through the medium of the eye where the faculty of sight is located, hence called the Loka), and he whose Mana (mind) is like its 'light' or Jyoti (because it is the mind that actually perceives all the visual sights of the external world and makes the creature's Atma aware of the various visible things that the eyes see, it is the mind which controls the functioning of the faculty of sight, it is the mind that enlightens a person about the existence of so many myriad and divergent forms in which Nature has revealed itself)—he is indeed the Atma of all the creatures and he is also known as the Purush or the supreme transcendental cosmic Soul called the Sarwa-Atma because it is the Transcendental Consciousness of creation which pervades uniformly everywhere. Anyone who is acquainted with or knows about that supreme Purush or Lord known

as the Sarwa-Atma is indeed called an expert in the knowledge of Brahm¹. [Do you know about him?]

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Oh yes, I know him. He is established or he resides in Aditya (the Sun)². Oh Shakalya! Ask anything more'.

Shakalya asked, 'Who is his patron deity (God)?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Truth'³ (12).

[Note--¹The meaning of this verse resembles that of verse no. 11 above. This visible creation is a manifestation of the Viraat Purush who constitutes the invisible macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. Since the Supreme Being called *Purush* has revealed himself as this visible world, all the visible exteriors of it are symbolically the external features of that Purush. In other words, that Purush is known and recognised by these visible features, and hence they are metaphorically his residence.

How do we see anything in this world? Definitely it is by the medium of the *eye*. So that Purush living as the Atma sees this world through the eye. Further, the eye is the location of the faculty of sight, so it is also the Loka, meaning the abode of sight. It is established that the Sun God known as Aditya has his abode in the eye of the creature. That is why the eye is able to see the world. Just like the celestial sun lightening up the world with its light, the eye lights up the world for the creature. Refer also Canto 1, Brahmin 6, verse no. 2 in this context.

But merely the eye cannot make a man aware of the things that he sees because it is the *mind* or Mana where all the processing of senses and perceptions is done. It is the mind that actually sees anything through the medium of the eye and then enlightens the man, i.e. the Purush in the form of the man, about what is seen. Therefore the mind or Mana is the symbolic 'light' which lights up the world for the man to see it.

And finally 'who' sees anything? It is not the mind, it is not the eye, but the living consciousness that sees, and therefore the Atma, which is pure consciousness and the true 'self' of the man, is the Purush who does the actual seeing.

²The indoubtable supreme Brahm is the most glorious, splendourous and radiant entity in creation; Brahm is an embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment; Brahm is personified Transcendental Consciousness. Light is the best metaphor that describes such a unique Being, and the best visible example of light that is at its greatest brilliance and splendour is the Sun. Besides this aspect, Brahm is the sustainer and nourisher of creation and the Sun depicts him the best. According to the Upanishads, the Sun God or *Aditya* is the personification of Brahm or the Viraat Purush in the sky. Upanishads treat the Sun as a metaphor for this Brahm; it is the visible residence of Brahm or the supreme Purush. The sun is dazzlingly bright, no one can see it directly; it never changes in shape like the moon; it is self illuminated and illuminates the rest of the world with its light; it removes the darkness of night which stands for the darkness of ignorance and delusion. It sustains and protects life on the planet— all these characteristic are associated with the supreme Purush. Refer Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 2 and Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 9.

³The supreme, transcendental Brahm is the universal and absolute *Truth and Reality* in existence. It is not a subject for debate and discussion. So, anyone who takes the refuge or shelter of this single 'truth' which is immutable, irrefutable, universal and constant, who sees, observes and witnesses this 'truth' through his eyes all around him as a manifestation in the form of the physical world with its multifarious variations, and who then becomes enlightened about the actual 'truth' behind the external façade of delusions and artificiality, is the one who actually knows about Brahm as the Atma dwelling in each individual creature of this world.

In other words, a person first sees the external world with his eyes. This world is a manifestation or a revelation of the supreme transcendental uniform and universal Brahm. Then he begins to ponder what the essence and the driving force behind the innumerable variety of creation that he sees is; he wonders what the essential element

behind this multifarious façade is. It is then that his insight comes into play and he sees that the real factor which drives the world is none other than the Atma which is a microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic Brahm. This Atma or soul, which is pure consciousness, acts like the battery that drives the entire world; it is like the dynamo that turns the wheel of the factory resembling this universe. At the individual level, this essential factor that drives this individual is the Atma, and on a larger plane it is the supreme transcendental Soul called Brahm of the creation.

Who does such an enlightened person who knows the fact worship and adore? The answer is that he worships the ‘truth’, the essential factor behind the external façade which is more often than not misleading. Incidentally, this ‘truth’ refers to Brahm at the macrocosmic level, and to the Atma at the microcosmic level. This is the ‘absolute vision’ of the Truth. Refer also to Canto 5, Brahmin 4-5 in this context.]

13. Shakalya said, ‘He whose mansions is the sky (Akash), or who pervades throughout the length and breadth of the sky, he whose Loka is the ear (i.e. who hears through the medium of the ears because the faculty of hearing is located in the ear), and he whose mind or Mana is the ‘light’ which illuminates everything for him (because it is the mind which actually enables the man to hear and comprehend what he hears and then act accordingly)—such a Supreme Being is indeed the Purush called the Sarwa-Atma because he is present as the Atma of all the individual creatures of this creation. Anyone who is acquainted with or knows that supreme Purush or Lord is indeed called an expert in the knowledge of Brahm¹. [Do you know about him?]

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘Yes indeed, I know about him. He whom you regard as the basic foundation of the entire creation and its living creatures, and as the cause and effect of the entire creation—he is the one who lives in the ear too as its conscious factor which enables the ear to hear. Oh Shakalya! Ask something more’.

Shakalya asked, ‘Who is his patron deity (God)?’

Yagyavalkya answered, ‘The different directions’² (13).

[Note--¹Brahm is the supreme Purush who is all pervading and omnipresent; he is uniformly diffused throughout the space of the universe. In fact, the *sky* is the only element that is treated as being the nearest synonym of Brahm because it bears the greatest resemblance to the latter, such as having the characteristics of being eternal, infinite, fathomless, measureless, pure, invisible, all-pervading and all-encompassing, uniform and universal etc. There is no place where there is no Brahm even as there is no place where there is no sky simply because everything that exist must exist in the space symbolised by the sky; nothing exists beyond the so-called ‘boundary’ of the sky because the sky has no boundary as such.

So the sky or Akash is the ‘Ayatan’ or dwelling place of Brahm as the Viraat Purush; he lives and pervades throughout the length and the breadth of the sky.

The sky has ether which generates waves, and the energy of these waves create the cosmic sound called Naad. Any sound can be heard only by the means of the *ears* because the faculty of hearing is located there. In other words, the man as a representative of that supreme Purush becomes aware of the presence of sound emanating from the various directions because of the presence of his ears. Since the faculty of hearing is located in the ear, it is the Loka or ‘center’ from where the man or Purush recognises the existence of life in this world symbolised by its ability of producing sound. It is like saying that the essence, the focal point or the Atma or the soul of life representing sound is located in the ear.

Now, it is well known that it is actually the *mind* or brain that actually hears and analyses all genres of sound bombarding the ears from all the directions, making them comprehensible for the man. In other words, the mind shows the symbolic ‘light’ to the man to enable him to recognise a particular sound and to neglect others.

Besides this aspect, it is the mind that stores all the information that a man hears for future reference; it is the mind by which a man learns anything and becomes enlightened and wise.

So the mind virtually 'illuminates' or enlightens the man about the existence of life, which is a metaphor for Brahm, in the form of the myriad sounds emanating from the different directions of the sky (space) of the universe where Brahm lives.

²How do we know that sound is a sign of life and the presence of Brahm? Well, since a vacant sky which has no air in it, e.g. a vacuum, will not produce any sound simply because the generation and propagation of sound requires the presence of a medium such as air or ether as well as the presence and movement of waves, it follows that such a sky which has no sound also has no energy and life represented by the presence of the vital air element, which is invariably needed to support life, in it, and therefore it also has no Brahm in it either. Hence, any vacant space or any vacuum cannot sustain life in any form.

Since there is no spot in this creation which is absolutely and perfectly vacant, it follows that Brahm is present in every nook and corner in this creation. Since sound is generated by the friction of waves in the air or ether which fills all available space in the sky, it follows that sound has its origin in all the *directions* of the cosmos or the sky.

In this example, the presence of sound is used as a metaphor for the presence of Brahm, because anything which has life in it, which is conscious and which is living can only produce sound. Dead things do not create and propagate sound.

It is known that the different directions have their own patron Gods. See note to Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 11. But these Gods do not have separate and independent existence; they are actually the same Brahm revealed in these various forms.]

14. Shakalya said, 'He whose mansion is the quality known as 'Tama', or who has cloaked himself in a veil of darkness and is disguised as Tama (because darkness, which is the meanest and the lowest of the three basic qualities in a creature that determine its basic characters and virtues, is also within the ambit of creation, it is very much a part of creation, and therefore it is one of the identification marks of the Supreme Being), he whose Loka is the heart (i.e. he has a residence in the heart where these lowly qualities also have their base), and he whose light or illumination is provided by the Mana or mind (i.e. he continues to commit unrighteous and inauspicious deeds because his mind does not show or light the correct path to him)—anyone who is acquainted with or knows that the Atma resident in the heart is none other than the supreme Purush or Lord of creation known as the Sarwa-Atma which is the Transcendental Consciousness of the cosmos personified is indeed said to be an expert in the knowledge of Brahm¹. [Do you know about him?]

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Yes, surely I know about him. That supreme Purush whom you recognise as the Sarwa-Atma resident in all the creatures is indeed like a shadow in nature². Oh Shakalya! Ask anything more'.

Shakalya asked, 'Who is the patron deity (God) of such an entity?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Death'³ (14).

[Note—¹*Tama* is a word referring to darkness, ignorance, delusion and all other such negative aspects in creation. It makes a man mean, lowly, sinful and most pervert in his dealings with the world; it represents the worst of the three characters present in a man, the others being Sata and Raja. So, a mean and lowly, a sinful and pervert man virtually lives surrounded by a veil of darkness and ignorance represented by Tama; he is so much cloaked by negativity that he becomes almost synonymous with these negative characters and qualities. For example, if say a man is habituated to speaking lies, then when anyone talks or thinks about him he immediately says 'Oh, that liar!'

Since the word Ayatan broadly means the mansion where a man stays, this quality begins to be his identifying quarters just like we say ‘the white square house down the street is where Mr. XYZ lives’. Similarly, Tama becomes a man’s mansion and resting place; it is his ‘Ayatan’. The Purush who lives in this abode of ‘Tama’ begins to be identified with it; he becomes a ‘conditioned Purush’. For example we say of a man, ‘Oh, that fellow who lives in the dark alley, in a decrepit house. Oh, there must be something wrong with him’. We make a mental picture, a ‘conditioned picture’ of him because of his place of residence. But this might not be the truth about that man.

The *heart* is the habitat where the Atma lives. It is also the place where either of the three basic characteristic inherent in a man—‘Sata’ quality or the noblest quality marked by righteousness and auspiciousness, the ‘Raja’ quality which is the medium quality which create desires for enjoyment of the world, and the ‘Tama’ quality which is the lowest of them, creating sinfulness and all round evil tendencies in a man—have their habitat. That is why we say ‘that is a noble-hearted man, or he is a wicked-hearted man’. So the heart is the abode of these qualities. When the Atma lives in such a heart, it is bound to be influenced and conditioned by it even as a man living in a dark and dank room is bound to be affected by his surroundings and become sick.

The *mind* is the instrument which the Atma uses for advice and receiving information about the outside world. It is the mind that enlightens the Atma and therefore it is like saying that it provides the latter with ‘light’. If the instrument that gives light is itself coated by soot, then how can it show a bright light to the man? Hence, a man who has a corrupted heart, and whose intellect and mind complex is also corrupted is bound to be surrounded by a coterie of darkness, ignorance, illusions and falsehood known as Tama. The Tama quality is the dominant virtue in him and he is literally identified by it. Such a man looks at everything with a pervert and wicked mind; he has an evil perspective of everything. Since the mind is that organ of the body which thinks and makes the other parts of the body respond to a particular stimuli received by the creature from the external world, it is therefore the mind which ‘illuminates’ or shows a ‘light’ to the heart and its resident Atma.

²*Shadow* is a synonym for darkness. Hence a person who has the Tama quality in predominance is covered by a veil of darkness; he is ‘shadowed’ by evil tendencies that cast a ‘dark shadow’ over his common sense, wisdom and erudition. Such a man’s wisdom and enlightenment are ‘overcast by the dark shadow’ of the evil tendencies and darkness represented by the Tama quality much like the shadow of the earth makes the bright disk of the full moon appear to be dark during the lunar eclipse, or the shadow of the moon makes the sun disappear during the solar eclipse.

There is another interpretation of the word ‘shadow’ when applied in the context of the Atma and the supreme Purush. Both the Atma and Brahm (or Purush) are invisible, but both are indisputably there in this creation at the same time. How? Well, a ‘shadow’ forms of something that is there, and not of imaginary things, such as the fact that ghosts and phantoms that have no physical existence do not form a shadow, but a stick casts a shadow in the sunlight. So this existence of a ‘shadow’ proves that there exists a principal entity though it is not visible to the eye. Further, a shadow is formed of anything when light falls upon it much like the case of the solar eclipse when the shadow of the moon falls upon the earth because it interferes with the light of the sun falling upon the earth. In the present context, Brahm is the transcendental consciousness that is the source of ‘light’ representing wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and self-knowledge. Brahm’s gross body at the cosmic level is the Viraat Purush, and at the micro level it is the body of the individual creature. So in effect the gross body of the creature is like the shadow of the supreme Purush formed by the light of pure consciousness known as Brahm at the cosmic level, and Atma at the micro level.

³What is the destiny of such a man in whom Tama quality is dominant? Of course, it is *death* and ruin for him. He virtually courts death and ruin. So they become his patron deity because he worships everything that is dark and evil. The natural inclination of such a man is to be sinful and indulge in all sorts of morally degrading activities. He will have no compunctions in committing a crime, and even gloat over his evil exploits.]

15. Shakalya said, 'He whose mansion or body or form (called the Ayatan) is the numerous forms, shapes, contours, countenance and other external features (Roop) of this visible world (i.e. he who is recognised by the myriad and divergent forms in which this external world exists because the world is a manifestation of that mystical entity), he whose Loka is the eye (i.e. he who sees this world and its forms through the medium of the eye), and he whose Mana (mind and heart) is his light (i.e. it is the mind and heart that enlightens it about the external visible world and endears it to him)—verily, that entity is the all-pervading cosmic consciousness called the Sarwa-Atma, and it is the one known by the name of the supreme Purush. Anyone who is acquainted with or is enlightened about such a stupendous and majestic supreme Purush or Lord is indeed well versed in the knowledge of the transcendental Brahm. [Do you know about him?]'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Yes indeed, I know about the supreme Purush whom you describe as the Atma of all the creatures. It is he who is reflected in the form of various 'Adarsh' or the numerous auspicious virtues and noble characters that are observed in a creature (or creation) just like one sees an image in the mirror which is an image or reflection of the truthful reality¹. Oh Shakalya! Ask anything more'.

Shakalya asked, 'Then, who is his patron deity (God)?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'Asu' (literally meaning breath, life, and affection; here meaning 'Pran'—which is the life sustaining vital wind in the body) is his deity² (15).

[Note—¹This verse appears to be an extension of verse no. 12 above—both emphasise the importance of 'truth and reality' which should be worshipped as against falsehoods and deceptions. The entire creation is a visible manifestation of the invisible entity called Brahm as if to prove the fact that 'that' invisible Truth called Brahm, though not seen physically by the eyes and therefore creates a doubt and ambiguity about its existence, is indeed truthfully and indisputably there in reality as is proved by its revelation as the physical world around us. It is in the form of the pure conscious *Atma* of all the living creatures that inhabit this world.

Since 'truth' is always holy and pure and pristine and divine, it follows that all the holy, noble, divine, auspicious and righteous qualities in this creation are representatives of that grand Truth, or they are like the visible *body* or manifestation or revelation of that Truth. They are like the 'Ayatan' of that Truth because one deduces the presence of the Grand Truth when one 'sees or observes' these noble and grand virtues in this creation and concludes that there must be a principal source from where these virtues have originated.

How does one see anything? Obviously by the *eye*, but this eye is not the physical eye of the body but the eye of wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment. It is the wise and intelligent discriminating mind and a dispassionate heart compositely called the Mana which 'enlightens' the man about the good virtues in creation, and throws *light* upon the fact that if he has these qualities in him, he would indeed be an 'image' of the supreme Purush. So an enlightened man who has 'seen' the 'truth' with his 'eyes' of wisdom becomes an *image* of Brahm. He, in other words, becomes the 'supreme Purush' himself because the glories of the latter are exemplified by this man. Or the grand virtues of that supreme Purush are 'reflected in him like an image is formed in a mirror'.

Hence, a person who is self-realised is the one who knows about that Sarwa-Atma known as Purush.

The concept of 'image in the mirror' has been the subject of an entire Canto no. 8 of Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition. It has been explained there in the context of Indra, the king of Gods and Virochan, the king of demons, seeing their own reflection in water and interpreting this reflection differently. The image in the mirror is a reflection of something which is actually and physically present, because no one can see an imaginary thing in a mirror if it has no physical existence. But to think that the image in the mirror is the 'actual thing' is an erroneous proposition, for it is merely a proof that the principal does exist, and not the principal itself.

²The deity worshipped, adored and honoured by that Purush, i.e. by the enlightened man who has realised the truthful existence of the supreme Brahm in the form of the all-pervading Sarwa-Atma that is pure transcendental consciousness characterised by the grand virtues of 'truth' and 'auspicious and noble virtues', is Pran or *Asu* because the latter stands for life as opposed to death, and 'truth' is a synonym of life while falsehood is for death.]

16. Shakalya said, 'He whose mansion or form or body (called the Ayatan) is the water element known as 'Aapa' (i.e. he who has taken the form of water to harbour and sustain life), whose Loka or abode is in the heart (because the Atma lives in the heart and it is the heart that is the symbolic pumping station of the water element in the body in the form of blood), and whose light or illumination is the mind called the Mana (because it is the mind that controls all the functions of the body, it is the mind that gets disturbed when a man faces shortage of water)—that Supreme Being is the Purush who resides as the all-pervading Sarwa-Atma which is the cosmic Transcendental Consciousness present in the entire creation. Anyone who is acquainted with or enlightened about such a supreme Purush or Lord is indeed an expert in the knowledge pertaining to Brahm¹. [Do you know about him?]

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Yes indeed I know about that supreme Purush whom you recognise as the Sarwa-Atma as the one who lives inherently in the water element as its integral part, and who is referred to as the Atma². Oh Shakalya! Ask something more'.

Shakalya asked, 'Then, who is his patron deity (God)?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'His patron deity is Varun³ (the Water God) (16).

[Note—¹Water was the first creation of Brahm and one of the most important element in creation—see Canto 1, Brahmin 2, verse no. 2; Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 13 and 20; Canto 2, Brahmin 2, verse no. 2; Canto 3, Brahmin 2, verse 10; and Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no.4 etc.

Water has life sustaining potentials, thereby showing that it has Brahm inherently residing in it. Therefore, water is the Ayatan or *mansion* of the supreme Purush. The most vivid form of water element is the blood in the body of the man because it is the blood that carries nutrition to various parts of the body and is regarded as being synonymous with life.

The *heart* is the instrument that regulates the flow of blood in the body, and thereby regulates the flow of life in the body of the man. That is why when the heart stops beating, the man immediately dies. So this heart symbolically is the Loka or abode of that Purush. Besides this fact, the heart is known as the abode of the conscious Atma of the creature, and this Atma is Brahm personified.

The *mind* is the central controlling powerhouse of the body; it is the mind that decides when a man is thirsty, it is the mind that tells him the importance of water and how to acquire it, it is the mind that controls the functioning of the body as a whole. Therefore, the mind is like the 'light' which enlightens the man about the

presence of the supreme Purush even inside his own body as his life sustaining blood, and externally as the numerous sources of water in the world.

Water is the basic necessity of life; without water nothing can survive. Hence, water is like the *Atma* or soul or the spirit of the entire creation; it is the elixir of life. Nothing can exist and survive without water. It is very dear to a man because no man can live without water though it is possible for him to live without food for some length of time before he dies. So water is deemed to be 'very dear to his heart'. The word *Ayatan* has 'dear' as one of its various meanings. This wisdom that water is very necessary for life and the demand of the body for water which impels a man to seek it at any cost when he is extremely thirsty is controlled by the mind as the mind controls all the functions and actions of the body. So, in other words, the mind is the 'light' or illumination of the *Atma* which feels the need for water, and it is the mind that guides the man towards the source of water.

²All the elements were created by Brahm when he desired to initiate life in its most primary form. Then, once having created them, he injected himself imperceptibly and most subtly in all of them as their basic life-sustaining capabilities. In other words, these primary elements, including water, could sustain life because they had pure cosmic consciousness called *Sarwa-Atma* injected in them. The most evident proof of this fact is when we observe that the water of the ocean which is undrinkable for a man and therefore apparently seems unlikely to support any form of life is on the contrary able to sustain a rich plethora of marine life. Similar is the case with water in a marsh, a swamp, a turbid river or a muddy pool—all harbour some kind of life.

³*Varun* is the patron God of the water element called *Aapa* or *Apaha*. The Water God known as *Aapo* or *Apaha* refers to the water as flowing in a river, as clouds and as any fluid. It has been deified in the Rig Veda, 1/23/16-22. He is the patron God of 'water on the move' or flowing water, such as rivers, rain, clouds etc. There are four Sukts devoted to him in Rig Veda—7/47; 7/49; 10/9; and 10/14. 'Aapo' is synonymous with *Pran* or life giving vitality; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life (*Shathpath Brahmin*, 3/8/2/4). *Apaha*, the water element personified as a God, appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/23/16-22; 4/58; 7/47, 49; 10/9; Yajur Veda—2/34; 4/12; Atharva Veda—1/4-6; 18/3/56.

Another name for water is 'rain' because it falls from the sky and seeds life on earth. It is then called *Parjanya*. It appears in the Rig Veda, 1/164/51. This God is responsible for rains and life on the earth; he is regarded as one of the forms of the Wind God (*Atharva Veda*, 4/15/1). *Varun* is the Water God—he appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/25; 2/28. He is the patron God of water (*Gopath Brahmin*, 1/1/7). He is regarded as the king amongst the Gods (*Taittiriya Sanhita*, 3/1/2/7). He is the lord of all the *Bhuvans* or abodes (*Rig Veda*, 5/85/3). He is regarded as the patron God of the night (*Atharva Veda*, 9/3/18).

Broadly speaking, this *Varun* is offered prayers and honoured in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—1/25; 2/28; 5/85; 7/86-89; 8/41; 10/124/5, 7, 8; Sam Veda—589; Yajur Veda—4/31; 10/7; Atharva Veda—5/1-2; 20/92.]

17. Shakalya said, 'He whose mansion or body or form (called the *Ayatan*) is the semen, whose *Loka* (abode) is the heart of a creature, whose light or illumination is the mind—that supreme transcendental majestic and mystical Being is the *Sarwa-Atma* residing in all the living creatures as their soul or pure consciousness known as the *Atma*. Anyone who is acquainted with or is enlightened about that supreme Purush or Lord with these attributes is indeed well versed in the knowledge of Brahm¹. [Do you know about him?]'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Yes I do know about him. The supreme Purush whom you recognise as the Atma which is very dear to the heart of all the creatures (men) is verily in the form of their offspring, the son, who is a representative of that supreme Purush or Lord of creation². Oh Shakalya, ask something more'.

Shakalya asked, 'Who is his patron deity (God)?'

Yagyavalkya responded, 'Prajapati'³ (17).

[Note--¹The *semen* is that viscous jelly-like fluid which has the nearest form resembling the primordial cosmic jelly from which the whole cosmos has evolved. Being fluid in nature, it also is a form of water element of creation which has been extolled in previous verse no. 16. The semen represents the gross body of Brahm at the micro level whereas the Viraat Purush represents his gross body at the macro level. Both have the miraculous abilities to generate life.

The sperm in the semen is a metaphor for the spark of life or the Atma in the body symbolised by this entire creation. The semen is a medium or a body which carries the sperm even as the body of a creature carries the Atma or soul hidden inside its bosom. Even as the semen which has no life-giving sperm is a worthless fluid, the body without the Atma is also equally worthless. So, the semen is the symbolic residence or abode or mansion, called the *Ayatan*, of the vital spark of life known as the Atma which is pure consciousness and which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm known as the supreme Purush.

The word 'Purush' is a male gender, and it signifies the body of the 'male' represented by the semen. The Sarwa-Atma of the creation is the invisible sperm present in this semen because this sperm is able to create new life-forms, both the male as well as the female.

Sperm is a metaphor for sexual passions and lust in a man, and such emotions as love, lust, passions and longings have their base in the *heart* of a man. The heart is also the abode of the conscious Atma. In other words, the Atma representing the supreme Brahm residing in the body of the semen as the sperm present in it is the same entity that has its abode or Loka in the heart also that depicts these qualities associated with love making. The semen is ejaculated when passions rise and reach a climax. This is the function of the heart— it is the heart that gets passionate and lustfully involved in the process of lovemaking.

It is the *mind* or the Mana which directs a man in all matters pertaining to the entire physical process of love making. Therefore it is like the 'light' that shows him the path by which his semen is made to bear the required fruit.

²A person loves his *offspring* (e.g. a son) just as the creator loves his creation. Again, just like the man being an image of the supreme Purush, being created from the cosmic sperm, his offspring (son) is also an image of him because the offspring is created by the sperm of the man. Brahm created man and other forms of life and enabled them to reproduce themselves so that the process of creation set in motion by him can roll on and on without hindrance, and the son is an important link in this cycle. So the offspring is very dear to the supreme creator himself who sees the son of the man as his own image. When a man sees his own son he feels very contented and happy. A father relies upon his son for all his future activities in life, and also to carry on his lineage and heritage. When he sees his brood, he feels very happy and contented. A son gives him mental peace, and it is natural for a man to yearn for a son. The son represents the creation created by the cosmic father known as Prajapati.

³The *Prajapati* is the God who takes care of the subject of the creation. Hence, he is the patron God of the newly born infant son. In the context of the semen, since it has the potential to create a new creature in its own likeness, it is akin to the creator Brahma or Prajapati. Further, only a male can have a sperm, so the analogy of this sperm with the cosmic 'Purush' who is of a male gender is most apt.]

18. Yagyavalkya said to Shakalya, 'Oh Shakalya! These cunning Brahmins have surely used you as a tong to remove burning charcoals from the fire. [That is, they have incited you to provoke me, they have used you to try to judge and measure the depth of my metaphysical and theological knowledge and make me sufficiently angry so that I'll cast my wrath on you, only to their amusement, and you were foolish enough to bite the bait! These cunning people have used you as a front man to settle scores with me, and to my dismay you have allowed yourself to fall in this trap.] (18)

19. Shakalya said, 'Oh Yagyavalkya, the way you cast aspersions or make insinuating remarks against the Brahmins of the Kuru and Panchal countries —do you do so because you think that you are a better expert in the field of metaphysics and theology?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'I have the knowledge of the different Gods and their famous virtues, attributes and characteristic feature that make them so honourable, praise worthy and worthy of worship. I also know about the directions where they live¹. [That is, I have a comprehensive knowledge of the various Gods symbolising the different aspects of creation and forces of Nature, and the places where these Gods are symbolically located, i.e. about their Ayatan and Loka or their manifestations and their habitats respectively.]'

Shakalya said, 'If indeed you know about the Gods and their respective directions, then.... (19).

[Note—¹Sage Yagyavalkya had emphasised in his earlier exposition that he worships the supreme Brahm as the Sarwa-Atma who is uniformly and universally present in the entire creation, and therefore in all the directions. The Gods are nothing but manifestations of the different virtues of the supreme authority, and they are designated specific function by that authority in order to carry on the administration work of the vast kingdom known as the cosmos without any glitch. Since Yagyavalkya is a very learned person, when he says that the supreme transcendental cosmic consciousness is the all-pervading Sarwa-Atma present as his own Atma, he implies that his own Atma is no less important and powerful than the different Gods worshipped in the various directions. In other words, it is 'his' own Atma that is established as the Gods everywhere, and since the body is the cosmos in a micro form, the various parts of the body are the symbolic directions of the physical world, and the patron Gods of these organs are the Gods about whom he is talking about. So, Shakalya questions him on these lines to find out whether Yagyavalkya is sincere, consistent and coherent in what he says by framing the questions differently.]

20. ...tell us, which is your God who resides in the East?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'I have the Aditya (Sun) as the patron God in the East direction'.

Shakalya asked, 'Where is that Aditya present?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In the eyes'.

Shakalya asked, 'Where is the eye established? [Or, where is the eye focused; what gives the eye its importance?]

Yagyavalkya answered, 'In the various forms or shapes or visible external features (called Roop) of the world¹.

Shakalya asked, 'And where is this form, shape, colour and various contours, i.e. the external features (called the Roop) of the visible world established? Or what gives them their importance and value?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In the heart, because it is by one's heart that one comes to love and get attracted to the pleasant sights of the world; it is through the medium of the heart that the man finds an emotional attachment with the physical world which he sees².'

Shakalya accepted this argument as the truth (20).

[Note--¹This is because a person sees the external features of anything that exist in this world, having any form or shape or colour or size etc., through the medium of his eye. The eye is the site of the faculty of sight that is exclusively empowered or authorized by the supreme Authority, i.e. by the Supreme Being, to 'see'. To enable it to do so, that authority has given it 'light'—because no one can see in the dark—and has taken up a symbolic residence in it in the form of the God of light, i.e. Aditya or Sun God. The easiest example from daily life is the 'torch'—the bulb of the torch shows light so that the space around the torch can be seen, and hence this bulb is like the eye of the body of the creature, and the 'light' is the Sun God present in the form of light energy in the filament of the bulb, while the 'battery' of the bulb is the supreme Brahm that gives the torch its power to light up.

The consciousness present in the eye which enables this otherwise inert organ to 'see' things around it is the supreme Purush represented by the Sun present in the eye. The celestial Sun is the eye of the cosmos, because the sunlight lights up the world and removes darkness, enabling a person to see everything around him. Without the Sun, no one would be able to see anything in the dark. This celestial Sun has been depicted as being the visible manifestation of the Supreme Being complete with all his majestic grandeur and dazzling splendour.

At the micro level of the individual creature, the pupil of the eye is like that Sun in the heaven which enables the man to see the world outside. The eye of a dead man is not able to see anything because the Supreme Being or Purush residing in the eye as its conscious factor known as the faculty of sight has left it, making the eyes useless and defunct.

It is to be noted here that at the time of creation, the Sun God took up his residence in the eye of the man who was an image of the Viraat Purush.

²It is the *heart* by which the body of a man is kept alive, and the eyes can see and the mind can enable the eye to see with its faculty of sight only till the time heart remains beating and alive in the body. As soon as the heart ceases its function, neither the mind nor the eye would be of any use for the man. It is the heart which makes anything seen by the eyes dear to a man; a man longs for anything seen by his eye and made possible to be seen by the mind because of the heart which gets emotionally attached to that pleasant sight, because heart is the organ where the notions of emotions and sentiments have their seats. Further, it is the heart where the pure consciousness Atma resides, and this Atma is the real identity of the creature. So in effect it is the supreme Brahm residing in the heart as the Atma of the living creature that actually does the seeing, and the instrument that it uses is the eye. It is the heart which endears a person to this world, and also endears the world to a person.]

21. Shakalya asked, 'Which God is do you recognise and worship in the South direction?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'The Yam God¹'.

Shakalya asked, 'What gives this Yam God his dignity, renown and glory; what is the base or foundation upon which this Yam God is installed?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In Yagya or the religious sacrifices; the fire sacrifices²'.

Shakalya asked, 'Where is the Yagya established, or on what is it founded or based? What gives the fire sacrifice its fame and dignity?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'On donation, charity and giving of alms (called Dakshina)³ which is made or given away during such religious sacrifices'.

Shakalya asked, 'What is the basis or foundation of giving donations and alms as well as making charities?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'On firm faith, conviction and belief. This is because only when a man has a firm faith in the belief and is convinced of the fact that giving of donations and making of charities are good for his spiritual welfare, that such donations or charities would provide him with the blessings and auspiciousness that can make his life fruitful both in this world as well as the world after death, and are the righteous and noble things to do, that he would be inspired to voluntarily engage himself into making donations and giving of alms and charities. Otherwise, if he is not convinced of the value of such deeds, he would not like to give away his wealth, which he has acquired with so much effort, to someone else'.

Shakalya asked, 'Where are these notions of faith, conviction and belief established or firmly present?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In the heart, because a man uses his heart to have firm faith, conviction and belief in anything. If the emotive heart is not involved in any deed, then the man is said to be 'half-hearted' in his endeavour, whether that endeavour relates to worldly matters or to the spiritual matters. The involvement of the heart gives rise to total commitment of the man towards any action that he takes; it lends an element of sincerity and devotion to the donation and charity that he makes (and the auspicious purpose for which it is made—which is to overcome the fear of death)⁴.'

Shakalya conceded that this fact is the truth (21).

[Note—¹The word *Yam* has twin meanings—(a) it refers to the God of death and the one who judges a person as to whether he should go to hell or heaven at the time of death depending upon the deeds done by him during his lifetime, as well as (b) the noble virtues of self restraint of passions, doing of penances, subduing death by means of these methods and in the present context by doing fire sacrifices, cessation of all attachments to the world and its deluding falsehoods, and such exercise that generally can burn and cause death of all negative tendencies and notions present in a creature. Obviously, the main benefit of doing a fire sacrifice is helping one to get rid of or symbolically burn all the evil and sinful effects of the various deeds done by a man because such sacrifices are fundamentally done for penance and repentance. The sacred fire symbolically burns all his blemishes and taints and just like gold is purified by putting it in fire, it is supposed that a man's inner self is cleansed of all impurities by doing a fire sacrifice.

Therefore, by doing the fire sacrifice or 'Yagya' with due diligence and sincerity, with full faith and conviction as to its effectiveness and potential of providing liberation and deliverance from this world to the soul trapped here, a man is able to symbolically conquer death. This is made possible because such religious activities inculcate noble virtues in him, his negativity is done away with, and he is able to overcome ignorance by listening to theological, metaphysical and spiritual discourses and discussions held during such ceremonies which enlightens him about the actual 'truth' about himself and his Atma as propounded by the scriptures, thereby awakening self-realisation in him which in its wake ignites detachment from all the falsehoods that has mired his intellect till now, paving the way for his liberation and deliverance from delusions and ignorance which have been tying his soul down to this mundane world of birth and death. This overcoming of ignorance by self awakening is like conquering death because death happens to the body and not to the soul which is eternal and imperishable.

²It must be noted that the two words *fire* and *sacrifice* are clear indications of what is to be expected from such religious exercises if done with proper understanding instead of merely doing it as a mechanical ritual ordained by some holy text. The first word 'fire' implies burning of all impurities and rubbish that has

formed a thick layer around the Atma thereby eclipsing all its wisdom and radiance, resulting in the purification of the soul and emergence of the Truth, because we usually say ‘I swear by the fire’ to prove that what is being said is nothing but an unadulterated truth. If the fire sacrifice is done with sincerity then it would cleanse the patron of all his previous blemishes and sinful deeds, thereby helping him to experience and witness the pristine pure glory and splendour of his conscious Atma shine through.

The second word ‘sacrifice’ implies that such a man has decided to forgo all sensual pleasures and comforts pertaining to this deluding and artificial materialistic world by detaching himself from all attachments with both the illusionary world as well as with the sense organs that are instrumental in forcing him to remain engrossed in pursuing this world in order to gratify these sense organs. Instead, such a person is deemed to have decided to pursue the path of Truth and forgo all things that are false and only go to tarnish the pristine form of his Atma by covering it with a veil of darkness and ignorance symbolising all things that are not truthful, all things that only trap instead of liberate, and which are not auspicious and righteous for the soul in anyway, thereby subverting his spiritual progress. Such a man would have given up all his previous inauspicious and unrighteous habits and temperaments, he would have surrendered all his negative tendencies and faults that were a part of his natural character until now, and he has now symbolically burned them in the sacred fire. Consequentially, he has become pure and pristine in his original form as the immaculate Atma, which indeed is his true identity.

Therefore, the fire sacrifice is a platform for cleansing all spiritual impurities that have eclipsed the shine of the glorious, radiant and splendorous Atma, for purging the man’s inner self of all his faults and negativity that has been shrouding him like a dark veil and has been preventing his inner glory from shining brightly through in its full glory, igniting self-realisation in him, and finally paving the path for his ultimate emancipation and salvation.

³The fire sacrifice involves giving huge *donations* and making great *charities* by the patron. Only rich, prosperous and financially well-off people can afford to hold such ceremonies. Such donations were usually made to great scholars who assembled at the venue of fire sacrifices where metaphysical debates were held and rewards given. Thus, these donations and charities helped to establish the majesty and grandeur of the chief patron in all corners of the earth from where these scholars came.

The giving of *donation* and making *charities* have another significance—they are symbolic gestures to indicate that the patron wishes to atone for his past indulgences by observing an austere life marked by non-attachment with worldly things and their attractions because during such fire sacrifices it is expected that he lead a very austere life. They symbolically indicate that he has decided to observe self restraint or *Yam*, and do away with all his worldly attachments and break all the fetters that have been tying him to this world because a man usually loves and remains attached to those things that give him gratification, pleasure and comfort, or are means by which he can acquire them. When he gives away his property, he indicates that he is ready or is making himself ready for the final and inevitable parting from this world and its allurements. It signifies his readiness to detach himself from material things of this world, and to pursue renunciation and austerity instead as a means to find liberation and deliverance from the shackling effects of this materialistic world that gives only temporary pleasure and comfort which are perishable. Instead, the man endeavours to pursue the path that would give him eternal bliss and peace by following the path of self-realisation accompanied by renunciation, which is the only way to conquer death and attain emancipation and salvation for the soul.

⁴As has been pointed out repeatedly in the Upanishads as well as outlined in the above discussion it is the body that dies and not the Atma or soul. So, when as a result of hearing religious discourses given during huge fire sacrifices, self-realisation

dawns on the man's mental horizon, he realises who he actually is and what are the causes of all his pains and miseries. He begins to see that he is not his body but the eternal and pure consciousness known as the Atma that resides in that body, and therefore all the cause of fear of death are dispelled immediately. Again, since it is the body that interacts with the world and not the Atma which is a mute spectator of all that is happening around it, such a self-realised man does not get attached to the deeds apparently done by him but not actually so, because his body which actually does the deed is not his true self. In this way he is able to *conquer the fear of death*.]

22. Shakalya further said, 'Which God do you recognise in the West direction?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'I worship the God called Varun in the Western direction'.

Shakalya asked him, 'In what is this Varun established (or where is he permanently present; what is that which gives Varun his dignity, glory and renown)?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In water'.

Shakalya asked him, 'What is that which gives this water element its definitive glory, its manifested powers and potentials, its dignity and renown? Or in other words, what is that which helps to establish the quintessential importance and significance of water element and is the foundation upon which the glory of water is based? Where is water established and present permanently?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'In the semen¹'.

Then Shakalya asked, 'Where is this semen established? What gives this semen its manifest importance and glory? What lends the semen with its renowned value and significance?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Semen finds its establishment in the heart. It is the heart that gives importance to the semen because when the man desires to have a son, when his heart longs for a son, he immediately thinks of the semen because the latter is the only means by which the heart's desires (of having an offspring) can be fulfilled. So the heart helps to establish and manifest the importance and significance, the glory and renown of the life-giving semen.

Further, this is why a son who follows in the footsteps of his father, who is obedient and devoted to him, who respects his father's emotions and sentiments, who possesses all the unique characteristics of the father in him, and who never opposes his father in any matter, is not only very dear to the father but such a son is also said to be an image of his father. Since a son is conceived by the medium of the semen, it is deemed that the special characteristics, qualities, virtues, temperaments and other traits that are special to the father are transferred to the son through the medium of the semen. Since the sentiments and emotions of a father have their seat in the heart, it is metaphorically said that the semen also has its symbolic seat in the heart of the father.'

Shakalya accepted this argument as the truth (22).

[Note—¹The *semen* is a life giving fluid, and all fluids have water as their basic ingredient. The semen is the best example of the magnificent potentials, stupendous powers and radiant life giving energy possessed by the water element—because though appearing cool and lifeless on the surface, it has that subtle vitality and vigour that are associated with vibrant life forms. Only an element that is conscious, alive, vigorous and energetic can reproduce itself, for lack of these qualities is like being impotent.

Since love making is an integral part of the entire process by which this semen can be used to produce a son, and passion and lust have an important and inseparable role in it, therefore it is said that semen finds its importance and glory because of the

heart as it is the heart that is directly connected with emotions and sentiments that control love and passions. See Canto 6, Brahmin 4 in this context.

The rest of the meaning is clear in the text.]

23. Shakalya asked Yagyavalkya, 'Which is your God in the North direction?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'The God known as Som¹ (literally, the ambrosia of bliss, eternity and happiness; the Moon God)'.

Shakalya asked him, 'Where is this Som present? Or what is the symbolic seat of this Som?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'In Diksha (i.e. in the initiation ceremony into a religious fold)'.

Shakalya asked, 'Where is this Diksha established? Or what is the seat of Diksha; where is it found? Or what gives it its importance and dignity, its renown and fame?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In Truth'. That is why an initiated person is asked to speak the truth².

Shakalya asked him, 'Where is Truth founded; where is it installed; or what is that which loves truth and is the seat where truth has its dignified and exalted presence?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In the heart³, because the heart is naturally inclined to accept the truth, and the latter is very pleasing to the former'.

Then Shakalya conceded that it was indeed the case (23).

[Note—¹*Som* is the drink used as a sanctified liquid during fire sacrifice not only as an offering to the Gods but also as a blessed drink empowered with divine mystical powers to be drunk by the patron. Usually only those priests who sing the hymns of the Sam Veda drink it. At the time of creation, Sam Veda was produced by the creator Brahma while facing North, and this direction is considered to be the symbolic residence of Gods who personify 'truth'. Therefore, Som is 'truth' personified in liquid form. The God who personifies Som is the Moon God, and he has his abode in the Mana, symbolised by the heart.

²*Truth* is indeed the great and final foundation of all that really exist, including the very concept of the Supreme Being that the scripture of any religion propounds. That is also why one takes an oath by putting his hand on the scripture of a religion to which he belongs when testifying in a court of law, because being an initiated person he is then not expected to tell a lie. The very basis of religion is 'truth', and this is the greatest of tenets of the scripture that one should pursue the 'truth' and abstain from falsehood. In fact, if there was no such thing as truth, there would be nothing left to rely upon in this world. Truth is the greatest and the finest quality that any person can possess; it gives him acclaim, dignity and fame; it makes him immortal in the annals of history which honours righteous and trustworthy men.

³When a man speaks the actual truth which has no trace of falsehood his *heart* is at peace with itself. When he speaks false, his heart beats faster and he becomes nervous. So it is sort of saying that truth has its natural habitat in the heart, while falsehood is alien to the heart, because a man becomes nervous when he is in a foreign country but is at ease when he is in familiar environ.]

24. Shakalya continued with his interview of Yagyavalkya, 'Which God is recognised by you in the Dhruv direction?' [This word Dhruv refers to the North Pole where the star called the Polaris is situated. It is believed that this point in the celestial sky is fixed. Here it refers to the Zenith.]

Yagyavalkya replied, 'The Fire God'.

Shakalya asked, 'Where is the Fire God established, or what is the symbolic abode where that God is present, or where is he to be found? What is that which is a manifested form of the Fire God and symbolically depicts his glories?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'In the power of speech, called Vak'. [That is why we say a man's speech was 'fiery', or that an angry man 'spews fire and brimstone' when he speaks angrily to someone. It is well known that a man's word can incite the greatest of violence and hatred because it contains the element of 'fire' in it.]

Shakalya asked him, 'Where is this speech' (Vak) established; or what is the seat from where this speech, or what a man speaks, emerges? What is that which gives the speech and the words spoken their punch and powers?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In the heart¹'.

Shakalya persisted, 'Where is the heart established?' (24)

[Note--¹The *heart* is the center which lends warmth and sincerity to what is being spoken. That is why it is said that one speaks from one's heart when one is very sincere in what he says; that the speech made was done passionately for a cause which is dear to a man's heart. So we say 'I'm pouring out my heart to you when I speak these words'. A man's speech becomes emotive and rousing when it comes direct from his heart. Otherwise, the speech becomes bland and lacks the vitality and vigour which is usually associated with the speech of great speakers. Singing a melodious song also requires the involvement of the heart and its emotions. We say that the man sang soulfully, and that the song aroused emotions in the heart of all those who heard the song.]

Verse no. 23 has established the importance of truth, and the greatest test of truth is when a man speaks. Both the truth and the way it is spoken have their symbolic residence or base in the heart. Though Yagyavalkya has not answered this question here, but it does not mean that he did not know the answer, for he has answered it during his preaching for Janak in Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 7.]

25. [At this question of Shakalya, Yagyavalkya became exasperated and lost his cool, and he cursed him —] 'Oh Ahallik (i.e. a ghost)! If you regard this heart as being a separate entity than your own self (i.e. if you believe that the heart is present somewhere else except inside the body where the Atma resides, and that is why you ask me such a ridiculous question which implies that the heart is present somewhere other than the body), then this body without the heart is torn apart and eaten by dogs (because a body without the heart is deemed to be dead and stray dogs feast on such dead bodies in a cremation ground if these bodies are left unattended), or pierced and ripped apart by sharp pointed beaks and claws of birds of prey (e.g. vultures) who also feast upon such bodies that have no heart (i.e. dead bodies) (25).

[Note--In short, Yagyavalkya severely chides and reprimands Shakalya for asking absurd and irrelevant questions. For does he not know that the heart is present inside the body of all living beings, and not outside?]

26. Shakalya was still unrelenting. So he continued with his questioning of Yagyavalkya, 'Where are you (i.e. your body) and the Atma (i.e. the pure conscious self) established? What gives them their strength and what is their support?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In the Pran; it is the Pran that is the basis upon which both the body and the soul have their existence in this world¹'.

Shakalya asked, 'Upon what is the Pran based, or upon what is it established? Or what is the seat or foundation of this Pran? Or upon what does it rely to carry on with its assigned functions, and where does it rest?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Upon the Apaana²'.

Shakalya asked him, 'Upon what is this Apaana dependent? Or what gives this Apaana wind its support so that the latter can carry on with its assigned duties?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In the Vyan³'.

Shakalya asked him again, 'Where is this Vyan established?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'In the Udaana wind⁴'.

Shakalya persisted with his questioning, 'Where is Udaana established?'

Yagyavalkya answered, 'In the Samaana wind⁵'.

Yagyavalkya continued— 'The Atma or soul, which is transcendental pure and pristine consciousness, is described by the words 'Neti-Neti' (i.e. No, No; Neither this nor that). It is 'Aghrihya', i.e. it cannot be grasped, imagined, seen or understood; it is 'Ashirya', i.e. it is imperishable, it does not decay and cannot be demolished, destroyed, eliminated, avoided or expunged; it is 'Asang', i.e. it is all alone and unique, it remains without any company in the sense that it is completely disassociated with the falsehoods of this world and remains aloof and unattached from it; it does not need a company or support for its self; it is 'Asit', i.e. it cannot be injured, harmed or tormented in any way⁶.

There are eight Ayatans⁷, eight Lokas⁸, eight Gods⁹, and eight Purush¹⁰ of this one single immutable and indivisible entity which is the pure transcendental consciousness in whatever that exists.

Oh Shakalya! I shall now ask you about that 'Purush' (i.e. about that indescribable all-pervading one indivisible Transcendental Consciousness) which has revealed himself into as many living creatures having numerous forms as there exist in the visible world. This supreme Purush transcends all conventional definitions and characteristics; he gathers or collects or attracts everything that there is in this existence and makes them collapse and vanish in his own self; he literally sucks everything and devours it, leaving no independent trace of their earlier form. This Purush has been extolled and honoured by the Upanishads which go to great lengths to explain who he actually is, but then ultimately define him as neither this nor that or as Neti-Neti. That Purush can be understood or known only by studying the Upanishads. That Purush, who is a synonym for what the Upanishads also call Brahman, is universal, immutable, uniform and one single complete whole; he is the all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent Supreme Being.

If you do not satisfactorily describe that Purush for me about whom you have been grilling me for so long, without knowing yourself the answer, then your head would fall down¹¹.

But the haughty and arrogant Shakalya had no idea of that Purush, and so his head fell down. Not only this, but thieves took away his bones, thinking them to be something else¹² (26).

[Note :- There are five vital winds, and they are the following—Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaana and Samaana.

¹The *Pran* is the life-sustaining vital wind present in the body as its breath. It forms the basis for the Atma and the body because without the Pran remaining in the body, none of them would be able to survive and exhibit their independent glories in this world, for without breath no man can survive and his body would die and therefore the soul would also lose its foothold because it needs the physical body to live and exhibit its stupendous glories and potentials.

²The *Apaana* wind is the vital wind that moves down in the intestines. It is the Apaana wind which is responsible for imbibing food and drink, digesting and extracting nutrition from what has been eaten or drunk, the passage of the food and drink down the intestines, and then eliminating waste products from the body. If any

of these functions is disturbed, it is obvious how difficult it would be for the Pran or breath to independently support life in the body. With a dysfunctional Apaana, the body won't accept food, the food and drink would not move down the intestines and remain in the mouth and throat, or stuck in the abdomen, there would not be any digestion and the body would be deprived of nourishment and lie like a piece of vegetable even though it may still breathe and exhibit signs of the presence of Pran and Atma in it, and without the elimination of toxic matters from the body it would be poisoned to death, and without the passage of gases it would bloat and burst. So we observe that Pran does depend upon the Apaana for its survival and for the chance to exhibit its stupendous and majestic potentials.

³The *Vyan* wind maintains equilibrium in the body; it pervades equally throughout in the body. It is only when the various parts of the body are properly maintained and provided with adequate support that they can function in their prime. So the Apaana wind is able to function properly because the Vyan wind keeps the organs of ingestion, digestion, assimilation and elimination in their prime condition.

⁴The *Udaan* wind is the vital wind that helps the body to get up and move about; it helps to move the nutrients towards the upper half of the body; it also helps other associated winds to move up inside the body and metaphorically lift the spirit of the man from a lowly level to a higher level. One can well imagine the precarious condition in which a man would find himself if he is unable to get up and move about—he would not be able to earn his food, he would be dependent on others even for his daily routine work, his body would become decrepit for loss of exercise and would be ridden with numerous diseases as evident in the case of those who are suffering from prolonged diseases and bed-ridden. If the body does not rise and move, even the digestion and elimination process get hampered. What is the good of having Pran or life in such a body? That is why those who are bed-ridden prefer death than being alive as a useless vegetable and being a burden on others. Further, in Yoga (meditation), the practitioner is able to levitate his body because he has mastered the art of controlling and coordinating his Apaana wind which is hot because of the heat generated during digestion etc., and the Udaan wind which can lift the body much like a hot air balloon going up in the air. Here, the *Vyan* wind helps to support all the parts of the body and prevent it from going limp and becoming distorted.

⁵The *Samaan* wind is the vital wind that helps to equally distribute nourishment in the body; the wind which controls circulation; metaphorically the wind that makes a man blessed with the virtues of equanimity and equality, of being judicious and compassionate. As the name itself suggests, it has equanimity and equality as its characteristic nature—i.e. it is impartial and compassionate towards all the organs of the body. It distributes nourishment equally to all the parts of the body notwithstanding their importance and size in the body. Therefore it is compassionate and merciful towards all. The Udaan wind depends upon it because if the Samaan wind does not take nourishment to all the parts of the body, the latter would not get sufficient nourishment, and without energy and vitality it would not be able to do anything. So all the other winds—Pran, Apaana, Vyan and Udaan—essentially depend upon this Samaan wind because for the basic fact that the latter provides energy to each individual organ of the body and aid in the functioning of these winds. In other words, the Samaan wind is the base or foundation of all the other winds.

⁶Since the *Atma* does not associate itself with anyone for anything that is mortal, it is not tainted by the various blemishes which are denigrating, decadent, demeaning, wicked, crooked and entrapping for it. Consequently, the Atma is not subjected to the horrible miseries, torments, agonies, violence and sufferings associated with the company of other things in this mortal world and which cast their tainting influences upon the Atma.

It must be noted here that when this Upanishad says that one vital wind depends upon the other, such as the Pran depending and resting upon the Apaana wind, the latter upon the Vyan wind, the latter upon the Udaan wind, and the

latter upon the Samaan wind, it means that although all the Prans are equally important and there is no distinction between the one and the other as to their importance as well as to the extent Brahm is present in them—for we cannot start the counting from any particular wind, saying for example that the Pran wind is number one and more important than the other vital winds--this hierarchical structure is only to show that even in the realm of metaphysics, a hierarchy is maintained, and at the apex of this hierarchical triangle is the supreme entity from which the various vital winds derive their authority and powers and potentials. That supreme entity at the micro level is the Atma as a representative of Brahm who is the supreme authority at the macro level.

⁷*Ayatan*— the word means a body, a mansion, a house, a dwelling, a resting place, something that gives solace and succour. It also means a measurement. So, the form that the Supreme Being known as the Purush takes, the body which he assumes, the form in which he manifests himself— are called his Ayatan. This is because the Supreme Being is primarily immeasurable, un-manifest, without any physical attributes, one who pervades everywhere but has no specific residence for itself, because this would imply that the supreme Purush is located in that specific abode and is not present outside that abode which is an incredulous and untenable proposition as far as the Supreme Being is concerned as he is present everywhere, being omnipresent and all-pervading. The eight Ayatans described in this Brahmin from verse nos. 10 till 17 are the following— Prithivi (earth), Kaam (passions, lust, yearnings and desires), Roop (countenance, shapes, forms, contours and sizes as well as colours of varying hues; the external features of this visible world), Akash (sky/space), Tama (shadow, darkness), Roop (forms and images of varying sizes and shapes as seen in a mirror), Apaha (water), and Virya (sperm).

⁸The *Lokas* —this refers to the physical place where the body lives, roams about and has its sphere of influence. For example, a kingdom of a king is his Loka; the ocean is the Loka of the water; the sky is the Loka of the sun; the heaven is the Loka of the Gods. Similarly, the heart is the Loka of the Atma, and the entire creation is the Loka of Brahm. The eight Loka for the Supreme Being known as the Purush described in verse nos. 10-17 pertain to his different Ayatans. They are the various subtle forms in which the Supreme Being resides. These abodes or Lokas of the Supreme Being or Purush are the following— Agni (fire element in its various forms), Hridaya (subtle heart having various qualities such as emotions and sentiments as well as the physical heart which pumps blood), Chakshu (physical eye having the faculty of sight as well as subtle eye of wisdom), Srotra (ear where the faculty of hearing is located), etc.

⁹*Deva* or *God*—This word refers to some entity who is worshipped, adored, honoured and revered by others; the patron deity for a particular Ayatan or form that the Supreme Being called the Purush has acquired when he revealed himself in this visible world. They have been listed from verse nos. 10 till 17 and are the following— Amrit (the elixir or ambrosia of life, bliss and happiness), Stri (a woman), Satya (the truth), Disha (direction), Mirtyu (death), Pran (vital breath), Varun (the Water God), and Prajapati (the guardian of creation; the creator Brahma).

¹⁰*Purush*— the word in its simplest form means a 'male'. But the Upanishads refer to the Supreme Being who has manifested himself as the macrocosmic, all-encompassing and all-pervading divine Lord known as the Viraat Purush. This Viraat Purush forms the gross body of the entire creation and it is from him that even the creator of the physical world, Brahma, was born aloft a divine lotus emerging from the Viraat Purush's navel. In the Purans, this Viraat Purush is known as Vishnu or Narayan who is the second of the Trinity Gods, the other two being Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder. The Viraat Purush created man in his likeness, and entered the man's body at the time of creation as his subtle soul even as the attributeless, supreme and transcendental Brahm had entered in the macrocosmic

body of the Viraat Purush as the supreme Soul of creation. That is why, since the man is a manifestation of the Viraat Purush, the Atma is regarded as a synonym for Brahm.

¹¹The *falling down of head* is a figure of speech to indicate that Shakalya was humiliated and defeated by Yagyavalkya and his head bowed down in shame and ignominy. He probably could not suffer such humiliation and cope with such a public defeat, and so went and committed suicide. The fact that his disciples had collected his bones proves this logic. It is also possible that his head was severed by the curse of sage Yagyavalkya because in those times great sages had that mystical occult power to implement their curses, powers which have vanished now.

¹²According to revered Adi Shankaracharya's commentary on this Upanishad, the disciples of Shakalya had collected his bones as his relic and were heading towards their hermitage. Robbers waylaid them, and thinking that the bag or parcel contained precious wealth donated to them by king Janak for their participating in his fire sacrifice, they snatched it from those disciples and decamped with the bundle of bones. The point emphasised here is that Shakalya's haughtiness, arrogance and impertinence had resulted in such a horrible end for him that even his bones could not be properly taken for being dispersed in a holy river or laid to rest near his hermitage after proper last rites.]

27. Yagyavalkya addressed the assembly, 'Oh respected Brahmins! You can now ask whatever questions you wish to ask from me, either individually or collectively. And then I will ask you either individually or collectively what I wish to ask. Go ahead'.

But none of them could muster enough courage to face the challenge (especially after seeing the fate of Shakalya) (27).

28/1. Yagyavalkya then unilaterally addressed the assembled Brahmins. He said, 'The man is like a tree. The external features, characters and virtues exhibited by a man are very similar to those exhibited by the vegetable kingdom (represented by the tree). The tree has leaves, and the man's body has hairs. The tree has a bark while the man has a skin which is equivalent to the bark (28/1).

28/2. The man's body bleeds like the sap or latex oozing out of the bark of a tree (when it is cut by an axe). The similarity between the two is evident when both are struck or hit—when a man's body is hit or cut, blood flows out from it, and when a tree is struck or cut, it also bleeds in the form of the sap or latex (28/2).

28/3. The flesh inside the man's body is like the soft tissue known as kernel of a tree. A man has a network of Naadis (veins and nerves) which are equivalent to the fibers/vessels present in the tree (e.g. the xylem and phloem and other tissues that help the tree to carry nutrition from one corner to another of its body). These fibers are elastic and strand-like which are similar to the Naadis present in a man's body. The bones present inside a man are like the wood of a tree, while the man's marrow is similar to the pith of that tree (28/3).

28/4. In spite of all these similarities, if a tree is cut from the top, it can survive and revive its self; it can sprout new branches and leaves from its roots and develop into branches and regain its original form in due course of time. But say from which root a man revives himself or comes back to life if he is cut down by death? That is, tell me from which root would a man revive himself or come back to life or take a new birth once his body has been declared dead? (28/4).

[Note--If a man's head is cut, for example, then it is impossible for him to stitch it back and come back to life. Similarly, if any part of his body is cut, it would not grow back, and the man would permanently remain deformed. This distinguishes the man's body from the tree. It also shows that the revival capacity of a tree is different from that of the man. It shows also that though apparently a man and a tree have many external physical similarities, but there are certain fundamental differences between the two. The answer to this query raised by Yagyavalkya here has been answered by himself in Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 12, 36; Brahmin 4, verse nos. 1-4; and Canto 5, Brahmin 10.]

28/5. If the answer is 'from the sperm', then it is wrong, because sperms are produced from a man who is alive, and not from a dead man. The tree also germinates from a tree (like a man having his origin from the sperm), but it is universally witnessed that when a tree is cut above the ground, it can still come back to life by giving out shoots and leaves from its roots. [In other words, even though the tree also has its origin in a seed like a man has his origin in the sperm, the tree can produce new shoots and regenerate itself when cut, but the man cannot do so. So there must be a difference.] (28/5).

28/6. If the tree is completely uprooted from its roots, it cannot come back to life. Tell me, when a man is killed by 'death', which is the root from where he takes birth again (in his new life)? [That is, if a man is uprooted from his present life when he is struck by the blow of death, then how does it happen that he is reborn and takes a new birth, whereas the tree which has been completely uprooted cannot reproduce a new tree?] (28/6)

28/7. Supposing it is assumed that a man has already been born, so he will not be born again when he is killed by death¹. This is not so, because after death he is indeed born again (depending upon his past deeds and their accumulated affects). So the question is this—who gives him birth again? Which is that authority that decides his fate after death and where, how and when he is born²?

The Brahmins did not answer this question³.

Then Yagyavalkya answered his question himself. He explained to them the crux of the problems in cryptic manner, saying—'Brahm is an embodiment of 'Vigyan⁴' and 'Anand⁵'. That is, Brahm is a fount of all knowledge and wisdom that exist, he is an embodiment of rational knowledge and thought that is verifiable and applicable (i.e. Vigyan); Brahm is a treasury of eternal bliss, joy and happiness, he is supreme beatitude and felicity personified (i.e. Anand).

He is the ultimate destination for those who give huge donations and make charities during and after fire sacrifices, i.e. those who are religious and follow the path of auspiciousness and doing righteous deeds. In other words, the patron who spends such huge amounts of wealth on fire sacrifices and other religious activities does so to obtain eternal peace and rest for his soul, and this is obtainable only by Brahm-realisation. Brahm is the final resting place for the soul⁶.

Verily, Brahm is also the ultimate destination of wise and erudite scholars who are self-realised and enlightened. Brahm is the final resting place for those who are sincere, steadfast and diligent, who have an unwavering faith and conviction about the irrefutable and unequivocal truth about Brahm, who are expert in the knowledge of Brahm as described in the scriptures' (28/7).

[Note--¹This is an erroneous conception because the problems would arise on two counts— (i) Why he attained death without attempting to die himself, as no one wants

to die and no goal is achieved without trying for it, and (ii) if he has been doing good deeds, following scriptural tenets and generally leading an auspicious and righteous way of life, then why didn't he become immortal, why did he come to an end, why did he have to die at all? And given the fact that he has died in spite of all objections, the question arises as to who will make him take a new birth again, or which is that authority that decides his fate and enables him to take a new birth after he has been completely uprooted from his present life upon being struck by death?

²Essentially, Yagyavalkya means to say that the supreme authority of creation that can revive even a dead entity is none other but Brahm. It appears an impossible task to revive a dead entity, but Brahm has such stupendous powers that he can do the impossible because he is omnipotent, almighty and all-powerful. Further, though the body has died and perished, the Atma has not, because the Atma is imperishable and indestructible. When this Atma leaves this body, it assumes another body depending upon the deeds this Atma had done when it was a resident of its earlier body. This Atma is 'not born' in the true sense of the word as it is applied to the tree, but it simply transferred from one form to another. So there is no question of the Atma—which is pure consciousness, an image of the supreme transcendental Brahm and the truthful identity of a man—dying and taking a new birth. The Atma has simply left its earlier body and assumed a new form, and this form can be that of a man, an animal, an insect or any other living being. This does not apply to the tree, and that is why when the tree is uprooted from its soil, it dies permanently.

The Holy Bible has this to say on the subject — (a) 'What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests on its branches' (St. Luke, 13/18-19). (b) 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me, and I in them, bear much fruit, because apart from me, you can do nothing' (St. John, 15/5).

³The Brahmins were stumped and left dumbfounded. They had no idea what the answer was. They had no idea about the 'root', the basic foundation, the fundamental essence of the essential, the basis of the basics about this creation. So they kept quiet, sat crest fallen with an ashen face in complete defeat and disgrace, being dismayed and ashamed of themselves. Perhaps they were scared stiff and dared not offend Yagyavalkya any further, so they decided to keep mum.

⁴Vigyan and ⁵Anand are one of the many majestic, sublime and eclectic attributes of Brahm. 'Vigyan' refers to a scientific knowledge about anything, something that can be verified and logically arrived at. Brahm is omniscient, all-knowing, most enlightened being, most wise, most erudite, most sagacious, most scholarly, and the best expert on any subject. After all, the virtue of 'knowledge' has its origin in Brahm; Brahm is the fount from where all forms of knowledge has sprouted; Brahm is a treasury of knowledge. So he is bound to be a personification of the best form of knowledge that exists— that is why he has 'Vigyan' as one of his attributes or epithets just as we say that a particular man is 'a walking store house of knowledge' or he is a 'walking encyclopedia'.

Similarly 'Anand' refers to the best form of beatitude and felicity that exists in creation. Brahm also has these attributes. So Brahm is regarded as a personification of the virtues of Vigyan as well as of Anand.

⁶The *final resting place* refers to the emancipation and salvation of the creature's soul. In terms of Vedanta, when an individual soul merges with the Soul of the cosmos, i.e. the Atma merges with Brahm, the former finds complete rest because it has found the original home from where it had set forth in its long haul journey in the beginning. And once it finds Brahm which is its final resting place from where there is no return, the soul gets eternal peace and happiness. Yagyavalkya means to say that even a lay person who does righteous deeds, such as making charities and giving donations, can attain Brahm, but these haughty and arrogant Brahmins who are proud

of their half-baked knowledge of Brahm would be of no where, they would go no where.]

Canto 4

This Canto has six Brahmins. The first four Brahmins (1-4) describe the dialogue between sage Yagyavalkya and king Janak in which the former preached to the latter profound metaphysical concepts about which Janak had knowledge, for he was considered the wisest king of his time, but his knowledge which he had acquired by hearing discourses from various sages was incomplete and was no match for what Yagyavalkya knew. Perhaps Yagyavalkya had got the hint of what kind of people were patronized by the king after his experience at the congregation as described in previous Canto no. 3. So the wise sage felt pity for the king that here was a wise and eager and sincere man who wishes to learn about spiritual matters but unfortunately he did not get appropriate company of really self-realised and learned sages. What he got was half-baked knowledge from selfish and greedy people who hankered for money and just wanted to establish themselves as renowned scholars for the sake of fame, without having any in-depth knowledge. So he thought to himself that he should enlighten the wise king, because it was his moral duty to give spiritual water to the spiritually thirsty. These four Brahmins have an uncanny resemblance to Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse nos. 3-23; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse 10-26, Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse 2-20.

The fifth Brahmin narrates the dialogue between the sage and his wife Maitreyi. The sage wished to renounce his householder's life and take to Vanprastha (a renunciate way of life lived by a mendicant or a hermit). So he asked his wife what she wished to have from him. Her answer that she did not wish any worldly assets but wished to have spiritual liberation is almost identical and appears to be a repetition of an earlier conversation between the two in Canto 3, Brahmin 4.

The sixth Brahmin, the last, is a legion of great sages and seers who were exponents of the school of philosophy propounded, expounded and espoused by Yagyavalkya. It is also identical to Canto 2, Brahmin 6 of this Upanishad.

Canto 4 Brahmin 1

[This Brahmin expands upon the concepts described in Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse nos. 10-17.]

1. The enlightened king Videha Janak¹ (farther-in-law of Lord Ram) was sitting on his throne. Sage Yagyavalkya came to him.

Janak asked him, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! Why have you come here? Have you come to me seeking alms or expecting animals (livestock such as cows etc), or do you wish to have an answer to or discuss with me some great metaphysical and theological questions which are profound and spiritually esoteric in nature?'

Sage Yagyavalkya replied, 'Oh king! I have come to you with both the things in mind!' (1).

[Note—¹Janak was also known as *Videha* because he was indifferent towards pampering his physical gross body and remained detached from worldly attachments of the latter].

2. Yagyavalkya said to the king, 'Oh king! I have come here to you to hear from you whatever you have heard or learnt from a learned, wise and erudite teacher or preacher (on the subject of Brahm). Tell me about it¹'.

Janak replied, 'The son of Shilin, called Shalini Jitwa, has proclaimed that Vak (the faculty of speech; the spoken word; voice) is Brahm'.

Yagyavalkya said, 'Just like a person who knows only what has been taught to him by his mother, his father and his teacher, and then is able to teach others only as much as he has been taught by them, Jitwa has also taught you that Vak² is Brahm. Indeed it is so, for what can a dumb person gain in this world when he is unable to speak and express himself. But tell me, has he told you about the 'Ayatan³' and 'Pratistha⁴' of Vak?' [That is, has he explained the various aspects of Vak to you?]

Janak replied, 'No, he did not tell me about it'.

Yagyavalkya said, 'Therefore, what he had taught or preached you is a one-legged (or incomplete, fractional, distorted, and only a part) aspect of Brahm⁵'.

Janak requested, 'Then please give me a holistic and comprehensive knowledge of this subject'.

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Vak (speech) is the Ayatan (a dwelling place or the body) of Brahm, while Akash (space, sky) is his Pratistha (i.e. where Brahm is established or present or based; which gives Brahm its glory, dignity and renown)⁶'.

One should worship, adore, honour and pay obeisance to that Brahm with this enlightenment, with this wise and intelligent thinking which is called the awareness of Brahm. This awareness is called Pragya⁷'.

Janak asked, 'What is this 'Pragya'? How is it akin to awareness of Brahm? Please explain it to me'.

The sage replied, 'Vak is Pragya. Oh king! It is through the faculty of speech, or relying upon this faculty of speech and the spoken word that a man becomes aware of his kith and kin; it is through speech that a man hears and becomes aware of the four Vedas—Rig, Yajur, Sam and Atharva. It is through the faculty of speech that a man comes to learn about Purnas (ancient mythological histories), the Upanishads (the philosophical treatises which form an integral part of the Vedas), Vidya (any knowledge which imparts expertise, erudition and skills), Shloka (hymns of the scriptures), Sutra (keys and formulas in metaphysics), Anubhikhyana and Vyakhyana (detailed narration and summary or brief of what has been said in the scriptures), Ishtha (meaning expression of desires and aspirations), Hoot (हूत —the system of offering oblation to the sacred fire during any religious sacrifice called the 'Yagya Karma' involving various rituals and chanting of hymns), Ashit (the auspiciousness and good deeds generated by feeding the hungry), Paayit (giving water to the thirsty), as well as the knowledge of the present world, of the future world and the world of the past—all these are made possible by the faculty of speech and the ability of the spoken word. It is by the Vak that a man gets his fame, glory, dignity and honour.

Oh emperor! Those who are wise enough to realise that Vak is indeed an embodiment of Brahm, the faculty of speech never betrays them; rather they are blessed by an immaculate faculty of speech⁸.

All the people offer gifts and pay tribute to such wise persons (because the people tend to honour such people for their articulate speech and wise words, for their expertise, scholarship, erudition and wisdom which are expressed by the words spoken by wise and learned people who become moral guides, advisors, teachers and preachers in the society). Such persons virtually become one like the exalted Gods themselves, and they find a place amid the Gods. [That is, such people who speak

intelligently, wisely and articulately because they have regarded their speech as a manifestation of Brahm are honoured like they were Gods themselves.].’

Hearing these words of great wisdom, Janak was very pleased and he wished to reward the sage. So he said, ‘As a reward for this wise council and the words of wisdom that you’ve preached me, I am awarding you with one thousand such cows that would produce such calves (i.e. ox, bulls) that would be as strong and robust as elephants. [That is, I am donating well-fed and healthy cows to you as my humble reward to you for you teaching me profound truths pertaining to metaphysics, especially the knowledge pertaining to Brahm.].’

Sage Yagyavalkya replied, ‘My father believed that one should not accept any wealth as a reward or fees without imparting the full and comprehensive knowledge to one’s disciple or an eager enquirer⁹’ (2).

[Note—¹This stanza shows that the intention of Yagyavalkya was to search for more knowledge if there was something more to be learnt besides what he already knew himself. He came to Janak not only to preach, but also to imbibe knowledge himself as is proved by the fact that he wished to know what Janak was preached earlier by some other sage. This is because he was certain of one fact—and that was that Janak was the best king to approach because of his high level of wisdom and erudition as well as an unpretentious nature. Besides, he always patronized great saints, so there was every chance that the king might know something that Yagyavalkya did not know.

²The word *Vak* refers to the faculty of speech and the powers of a man to express himself in words. The importance of this faculty cannot be overemphasized because without speech and the ability to speak and express himself, a man is neither able to interact with the world in a proper and fruitful manner, nor is he able to benefit others with his own knowledge, because speech is a vital medium of expression and letting others share one’s knowledge and enhance their own body of knowledge. A dumb man is also not able to learn more than what he already knows because he is unable to ask questions. Refer also to Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 8; Canto 1, Brahmin 6, verse no. 1, and Canto 3, Brahmin 2, verse no.6 in this context.

³The word *Ayatan* means the body, residence, dwelling, form or shape, i.e. the external features by which anything is known or recognised.

⁴The word *Pratistha* refers to the establishment, dignity, fame, glory and majesty; the base and foundation in all the three dimensions of time— past, present and future—of any entity, here it is the faculty of speech and expression known as ‘Vak’. The concept of *Ayatan* and *Pratistha* has been discussed earlier in Canto 3, Brahmin 9 in detail.

⁵Brahm has four legs or pedestals or aspects like a four-legged stool. All of them are equally important to support the supreme, divine and magnificent edifice and the transcendental institution of Brahm. It has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition in its Canto 4, section 5-8.

⁶That is, the faculty of speech is an apparent manifestation of Brahm; the speech is an embodiment of Brahm. Brahm reveals himself as speech or voice. This analogy of Brahm and Vak is very important and significant because both possess certain attributes which are common to them—such as their being invisible, their being one of the most evident and manifest signs of life, wisdom and intelligence in this creation. Vak (speech) depends upon the Pran, the vital wind that is called breath and which is essential to support life in the body of the creature, while Brahm is that Pran personified. Vak is a manifestation of the fire element which again is a personification of certain typical characteristics of Brahm. So it is said that Vak is the *Ayatan* of Brahm. Brahm reveals himself through the faculty of speech.

Open space or Akash element is needed as a medium to hear anything because sound cannot travel in a solid medium and that is why we cannot hear things when there is a wall between the speaker and the one who hears. Speech is a form of sound

wave traveling in space through the medium of air. In other words, Vak is established in the space or sky element; the latter gives the former its importance and validity because if one does not hear what is being spoken then the Vak would lose its relevance. Hence, *Akash* is its Pratistha. Since Vak as a manifestation of Brahm, therefore Akash is the Pratistha of Brahm. Further, it is a well established principle of Vedant that Brahm is an invisible, featureless, eternal, infinite, measureless, fathomless, pristine pure, uncorrupt, all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent entity, and the Akash also has these attributes. So the latter is like the 'Pratistha' of the former; it is like the glory and dignity of Brahm on display.

Please also refer to verse nos. 2-7 of this Brahmin as well as to earlier Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no 12; Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 5; Canto 2, Brahmin 3, verse nos. 2-5; Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse nos. 10; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse nos. 8, 12; Canto 3, Brahmin 8, verse nos. 3—11; and Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 13 in the context of the Akash element.

⁷Technically, the word *Pragya* refers to consciousness or awareness of anything by a man. It means the best form of knowledge and intelligence. In the realm of metaphysics, the awareness of the pure conscious Atma or soul and its relationship with the supreme transcendental Lord that arises by realisation of the true self and the ultimate Truth by experiencing and witnessing and application of wisdom and erudition, is also called Pragya. Deep insight into anything, the ability to have a broad vision, and to be able to use intelligence to peek into the far reaches of the future are also called Pragya. According to Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, 1/7, the faculty by which one accepts the various perceptions pertaining to knowledge and wisdom, that by which one comes to know what can be known, and that by which desires and aspirations are accepted and acknowledged is called Pragya. It is associated with pure and pristine consciousness in Adhyatma Upanishad, 44, and with Pran in Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, 3/3. Gyan or knowledge that is refined and distilled is known as Pragya. Since quest and acquisition of truthful knowledge about the ultimate Truth and absolute Reality in this creation, universally known as the supreme transcendental Brahm, is the final goal of all Upanishadic teaching, Pragya is also synonymous with Brahm realisation according to Shukar Rahasya Upanishad, 2/1, and Atma Bodho Upanishad, 1/1.

⁸That is, they don't have to fear from any faults generally associated with speech; they have a good command of it, and they do not have to stumble, wobble and stammer in search for proper words to express themselves; they are blessed with articulate speech and they do not have to fear of becoming dumb or tongue-tied.

⁹That is, unless the teacher has completely divulged all the knowledge he has to his disciple, or until the time the disciple is fully satisfied with all his enquires and has been imparted full knowledge for which he had come to the teacher, the latter is not supposed to accept any reward or fees from the former. If he does so, it would be a sinful act and demeaning for the institution of a teacher. This refusal by Yagyavalkya shows that he was not a greedy and selfish man like the other seers who had given Janak one bit of knowledge and walked away with a bounty of gifts.]

3. Yagyavalkya asked, 'I wish to hear whatever you've been told about Brahm by any person (such as a teacher or preacher)'.

Janak replied, 'Udank, the son of Shulba, had preached me that Pran¹ is Brahm.'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Just like a person who is properly educated under the wise guidance of his mother, father and a learned teacher, what Udank has said—that Pran is Brahm—is indeed true because it is not possible to do anything without Pran (life) inside the body. But has he told you anything about the Ayatan (body, form and dwelling where this Pran lives and by the external features of which it is recognised)

and Pratistha (established glory, majesty, grandeur, dignity, esteem and visible fame) of this Pran?’

Janak replied, ‘No he did not tell me anything about it.’

Yagyavalkya observed, ‘Well then, this is an incomplete, a lop-sided, and one-legged (i.e. a part or fractional and incomprehensive) knowledge of Pran’.

Janak requested him, ‘Then pray, please tell me all about it yourself’.

Yagyavalkya elaborated on the matter, ‘The Ayatan (body, form, shape and dwelling) of Pran is Pran itself²; its Pratistha is the Akash (the space or the sky element)³. One should regard Pran as one’s nearest and dearest one (because without Pran, the body would be dead and all the rest of the creation will lose its relevance and significance because the world has no importance for a dead man). One should therefore worship, admire, honour and respect Pran with these qualities and with this understanding’.

Janak enquired, ‘What is meant by the endearment of the Pran; or how can one ascertain that Pran is very dear to someone?’

Yagyavalkya answered, ‘It is due to one’s desire to sustain and enhance the welfare of one’s own Pran or life (such as a desire to have a long and disease free eternal life) that one undertakes to do fire sacrifice at all cost, even if it involves the employment of incompetent priests. Similarly, one accepts alms (such as food and money) even from those from whom one should not ordinarily accept it (e.g. a Brahmin accepting food and water from a low caste person in order to survive during emergencies such as famines and droughts). It is for the fear of the welfare and protection of Pran or one’s life that one is afraid to go to unknown places (such as bandit infested country, or a dense forest infested by wild animals, or to another place which might prove dangerous for the life and well being of a person). Oh King! All this is done for the sake of preserving and protecting the Pran (life).

Oh emperor! Pran is indeed Brahm⁴. One who goes about his daily chores with this holistic wisdom and eclectic realization about Pran as a manifestation of Brahm is never betrayed by Pran, he is never abandoned by Pran. All creatures offer gifts (i.e. their respect and tributes) to him. He lives an honourable and respected life amid them as if he were a God (i.e. the people show him the same respect as they show to their Gods; they have reverence for him and regard him exalted and noble)’.

Videha Janak said, ‘Oh sage! I donate to you one thousand cows capable of producing bulls (calves) as strong and robust as elephants (as a reward to you for your teaching me)’.

Yagyavalkya said, ‘My father believed, and he had advised me, that one should not accept any reward or alms (i.e. any fees) from anyone (i.e. any disciple) without giving a complete and comprehensive knowledge to the person who has sought this knowledge from him. Hence, I will not accept anything till my preaching is complete (3).

[Note—¹*Pran* refers to the vital signs of life in the body of a man; the breath; the consciousness present in the various organs that enables them to function. Pran is a term which therefore refers to the vital winds present in the body—such as the breath which is usually called chief Pran because without breath no man can survive, as well as other vital winds such as *Apaan*, *Vyan*, *Udaan* and *Samaan* etc. Please refer to Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 26 for details. Other verses for ready reference in the context of Pran are 1/5/4-7; 3/7/16; 3/9/9.

²This is because Pran is a form of vital wind, and wind is the second most subtle element in creation after the sky, occupying all the space available to it. All forms of vital winds are one form or the other of one single element, the air or wind element, and the various names assigned to them are just for the purposes of ease of

comprehension depending upon the functions the wind/air performs. It is invisible as compared to other elements such as fire, water and earth. Even the sky appears to have a colour and is visible, but wind/air can never be seen. The air assumes the shape of the container or vessel that is empty. Hence, its shape, form and external features called its *Ayatan* can never be conclusively and positively fixed and determined.

³Akash is the *Pratistha* of wind or air element because it is established in sky and it occupies all the space available. The special attributes and characteristics peculiar to the sky element are also applicable to the wind/air element—such as the fact that they are eternal, infinite, immutable, indivisible, invisible, all-pervading, all-encompassing, subtle etc. These unique qualities represent their magnificent glory, majesty and grandeur, and both are famed and renowned for them.

The concept of *Ayatan* and *Pratistha* has been described in verse no. 1 above, as also in Canto 3, Brahmin 9.

⁴Pran is likened to Brahm because the former possesses the characteristic attributes unique to the latter—such as being eternal, infinite, invisible, immutable, indivisible, all-pervading, omnipresent etc. Pran is very dear to a person like it was his most precious asset even as Brahm is very dear to a self-realised person who has experienced the bliss and ecstasy obtained by realisation of the ultimate Truth.]

4. Yagyavalkya once again asked Janak, ‘Tell me about what you’ve learnt from some other wise and learned teacher’.

Janak replied, ‘Barku, the son of Vrishna, told me about the fact that the Eye is Brahm¹’.

Yagyavalkya said, ‘Just like a man who has been properly educated under the wise guidance of his mother, father and a learned teacher, Barku has indeed told you what he has been taught by them that the eye is Brahm, because it is not possible to see anything without the eyes. But has he told you anything about the *Ayatan* (residence, form, shape or body) and *Pratistha*² (established glory, majesty, grandeur, dignity, esteem and visible fame) of the eye?’

Janak replied, ‘No, he didn’t’.

Yagyavalkya observed, ‘Well then, this is an incomplete, lopsided and one-legged (i.e. incomprehensive and a part) knowledge pertaining to Brahm’.

Janak requested, ‘Would you please give me a comprehensive and holistic knowledge of this subject?’

Yagyavalkya expounded on the subject in detail, ‘The *Ayatan* of the eye is the eye itself (i.e. the subtle faculty of sight takes the form of the physical organ of the eye). The *Pratistha* of the eye is the Akash or sky or space (because we easily see things in open space, not something hidden underground, in a cave, or present inside a solid). One should worship, admire and honour the eye as an entity personifying Truth’.

Janak enquired, ‘What is truthfulness?’

Yagyavalkya explained, ‘The eye is an embodiment of truth; it is a personification of truth; it is a witness of the factor defined as ‘reality and truthfulness’. This is because when a person is asked whether what he says is the truth, he replies that yes indeed, he has ‘seen it with his own eyes’. Therefore what he says is not hearsay but is something seen by him first hand; it is indeed a fact, something which is ‘true’, something he has observed himself.

Oh emperor! That is why the eye is regarded as an embodiment of, or a manifestation of, or a revelation of something that is ‘truthful and real’, and not something based on mere conjecture. That is also why the eye is a personification and a symbolic residence of the supreme and transcendental Brahm, because this Brahm is

the ultimate Truth and Reality in creation and not merely an imagination of the mind. A person who realises this incontrovertible fact is never abandoned by the faculty of sight; the eyes never forsake him. In other words he possesses both the 'physical sight' to see worldly things around him as well as the 'subtle penetrating insight' into those things which are not physically seen but are in the realm of the sub-conscious and transcendental³. All the creatures of this world show respect and honour to him; he becomes as revered, respected, honourable and exalted as a God'.

Videha Janak was very pleased. He said, 'Oh Sage! I shall donate to you one thousand cows capable of bringing forth calves (bulls) that would be as strong and robust as elephants'.

Yagyavalkya declined the charitable offer of Janak, saying, 'My father believed (and therefore he advised me) not to accept any alms or donation as a reward (i.e. as fees) without imparting a complete and comprehensive knowledge to a disciple or student. Hence I will not accept the cows because much is left to be preached (4).

[Note—¹The faculty of sight present in the *eye* is a manifestation of the magnificent power of seeing that the supreme authority of creation, i.e. Brahm, possesses. The Sun God has taken up his symbolic residence in the eye at the time of creation to signify that this instrument would light up the world for the pure conscious Atma resident in the bosom of a creature/man just like the celestial Sun lights up the dark bowl of the world with its brilliant light. Had it not been for the eye, the world would have been a dark, gloomy and foreboding proposition for the creature. The 'eye' here not only means the physical eye of the body, but also the eye of wisdom and deep insight. This latter eye is of a greater importance for the long term spiritual upliftment and welfare of a man. The eye is a metaphor for wisdom, erudition and enlightenment present in a man. Since the eye is the source of all vision, it is a symbol of all knowledge and awareness that a man possesses; it is a lantern that removes the veil of darkness for the Atma which sees the world through this instrument both at the physical gross level as well as the subtle level. Since the ability to 'see' resides in the eye, and this ability lights up the world for the creature, it is said that the eye is the Ayatan or residence of Brahm. Since the faculty of sight helps the man to get established in the world, it is the Pratistha of Brahm resident in the eye of the man. The importance of the eye vis-à-vis Brahm has been elaborately described in Canto 1, Brahmin 6, verse no. 2; Canto 3, Brahmin 3, verse no. 5; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 18; and Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 12 and 15 of this Upanishad.

²The concept of Ayatan and Pratistha has been elaborately described in verse nos. 1 above.

³That is, he is able to see the physical world with his external organ of the eye, as well as the hidden mysteries of the esoteric and sublime things which can only be perceived by the deep sight of wisdom and enlightenment present in him. The latter is called insight while the former is simply sight. This insight along with a sharp intellect and an analytical mind enables a person to peep deep into things and unravel the greatest of mysteries pertaining to creation and its multifarious aspects. It also enables him to see the real truth behind the façade of apparent truth. He can see beyond the present and is blessed with a foresight which makes him a man of vision.]

5. Yagyavalkya said to Janak, 'Please tell me whatever you've been told (about Brahm) by some other wise and learned teacher'.

Janak replied, 'Gardabhi, born in the family of sage Bharadwaj, has preached me that the Ears are Brahm¹'.

Yagyavalkya said, 'Just like a person who has acquired proper education under the guidance of his mother, father and a wise and erudite teacher, what Gardabhi has said is indeed the truth that the ears are Brahm personified, because it is not possible to hear anything without the ears². But has he told you anything about the

Ayatan (the body, residence, form or shape) and the Pratistha (established glory, majesty, grandeur, dignity, esteem and visible fame) of it³?

Janak replied, 'No, he didn't'.

Yagyavalkya then said, 'Well then, what he has preached you is a lop-sided, incomplete and a fractured (i.e. incomprehensive and un-holistic) view of the subject'.

Janak asked, 'Then, what is the full knowledge or which is the comprehensive knowledge on this subject? Please tell me all about it'.

Yagyavalkya preached him, 'The Ayatan of the ear is the ear itself⁴. The Akash (space/sky) is its Pratistha⁵'.

So one should honour this ear as 'Anant' (an endless, infinite entity) because the sky itself is Anant (and the ears hear as far as the directions stretch in the sky or space around the person)'.

Janak enquired, 'What is being Anant?'

Yagyavalkya explained to him, 'The directions are endless and infinite; they have no periphery or boundary. When we go in a particular direction, it moves ahead of us, and this continues till infinity. Hence they are called 'Anant'. One can continue going in a particular direction but never come to the end of it.

Oh emperor! The different directions are manifestations of the macrocosmic ears of the cosmic entity that is present everywhere. And this entity is known as Brahm. Since sound can emanate in any given direction and can be heard there or elsewhere, the faculty of hearing that dwells in the organ of the ear is a representative of the divine power of Brahm to hear infinitely, and the ear itself is Brahm's symbolic residence as the astounding faculty of hearing.

A wise and erudite person who goes about his life with this erudition and wisdom as well as the realisation of the importance and implication of this statement (that the ear is Brahm) is never abandoned or forsaken by the ear and its faculty of hearing⁶. All living beings respect and honour him like God; they follow him (because he is deemed to be a learned man who can then his ears, hear their problems and solve them judiciously). Such a person attains the stature of a God personified (i.e. he becomes a God-like figure for the rest of the society)'.

Janak was pleased, and he said, 'Oh sage! I donate one thousand healthy cows to you. These cows would produce calves (bulls) that would be strong and robust like elephants'.

Yagyavalkya expressed his reluctance. He said, 'Oh king! My father was of the view (and hence I also believe) that a teacher or preacher should not accept donation or reward (i.e. fees) from his student or disciple without giving him complete and comprehensive knowledge on any subject. So I decline to accept your offer, for the teaching is still incomplete' (5).

[Note--¹The faculty of hearing present in the *ear* is a manifestation of the magnificent power of hearing that the supreme authority of creation, i.e. Brahm, possesses. The various patron Gods of the different directions have taken up their symbolic residence in the ear at the time of creation to signify that this instrument would make the pure conscious Atma resident in the bosom of a creature/man aware of the presence of the external world by virtue of the varied sounds emanating from and coming in from all the directions. It is through the ear that the man becomes enlightened about what is there in areas which cannot be directly seen and witnessed by the medium of the eye or by touching and feeling through the medium of the skin. The ears have a wide reach and a man is able to hear about developments in far away lands even without actually going there because of the faculty of hearing located in his ear. Since Brahm is synonymous with wisdom and enlightenment, and since this faculty of hearing is located in the gross structure of the body known as the organ of hearing called the

ear, it is deemed that Brahm too symbolically resides in the ear and the latter is the external manifestation of the former. In other words, the ear is the Ayatan (residence) as well as the Pratistha (manifested glory) of Brahm. Had it not been for the ear, the world would have been a deadly silent and gloomily foreboding place for the creature/man to live. The 'ear' here not only means the physical ear of the body, but also the ear of wisdom, erudition, intelligence and knowledge because it is with the help of the ear that one hears and learns what is being taught by a wise teacher. This latter ear is of a greater importance for the long term spiritual upliftment and welfare of a man. The ear is a metaphor for awareness, alertness, vigilance and presence of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment in all the living creatures. That is why even animal's ears stand up when they hear any sound; they become alert and ready to respond. That is also why we say 'I was all 'ears' when a particular thing was being said'. Since the ear is the source of all hearing for the Atma, it is a symbol of all knowledge and awareness that a man possesses; it is kind of symbolic radar that removes the veil of ignorance for the Atma which hears the world through this instrument both at the physical gross level as well as the subtle level. The importance of the ear vis-à-vis Brahm has been elaborately described in Canto 3, Brahmin 3, verse no. 6; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 19; and Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 13 of this Upanishad.

²*Brahm* is pure awareness and consciousness, and it is this unique virtue and attribute in a creature that makes it possible for it to hear and understand what is being spoken and heard. No other organ has this faculty and facility that they can make the creature aware of what is being said, and therefore they cannot help the creature to become aware and enlightened about developments in this world and acquire knowledge of any kind. Since Brahm is knowledge and wisdom personified, it naturally follows that the ears are vivid revelations of Brahm.

³The concept of *Ayatan* and *Pratistha* has been elaborately described in verse nos. 1 above. Since the ear is a physical structure where Brahm dwells (in the form of faculty of hearing) in a subtle form, the ear is said to be Brahm's Ayatan. Since the ear gives fame and renown to a man because it is by the ears that he learns and becomes aware of so many things in this world, it is through the ears he hears what his teacher teaches him, and also because it is through the ears that his fame and renown is heard in distant corners of the world, the ear is Brahm's Pratistha because it helps to establish Brahm's glory and majesty everywhere.

⁴This is because the subtle faculty of hearing is located in the gross body or structure known as the ear; the latter is the seat of this divine faculty. Therefore, the subtle ear representing the power to hear has its dwelling in the gross ear which is a physical organ of the body.

⁵The ear hears sound coming in from all the different directions. Sound travels in space. Hence the relevance of the ear is directly related to the ability of the person to hear any sound emanating from any direction. To say that the ears are established in the sky or space is a metaphorical way of saying that the ears have their utility because they hear sound which comes to them from different corners of the sky or directions around the person. It is due to their ability to hear the sound that the ears have their importance and their fame. That is why they are said to be symbolically established or founded in the sound emanating from the Akash or sky around the ear. The ears have a natural affinity for sound; they will turn towards the source of sound automatically. In other words, they are 'sound positive' just like a new sapling which would always turn towards the sky and light, or the eye which would always turn towards pleasant sights.

⁶Such a person would use his ears wisely and judiciously to hear only things worth hearing, and filter off rubbish clamour from clogging his mind. The analogy of a radio can be cited here—we tune to a particular station which we wish to hear and thereby literally shut off our ears to hundreds of stations bombarding the radio waves around us. Likewise, a wise man would accept (hear) only good (righteous and

auspicious) things and reject what is unrighteous and inauspicious. As a result, his mind would not be cluttered by nonsensical information and would be clear enough to be welcoming and be receptive of all good things. This is what is meant by saying 'his ears would not abandon him'.]

6. Yagyavalkya continued with his preaching, 'Oh Janak! Whatever you have been taught about Brahm by some other teacher, please let me know about it'.

Janak replied, 'Satyakam Jabal has told me that the Mana (mind) is Brahm¹'.

Yagyavalkya replied, 'He has told you something which was taught to him by his parents and teacher, because surely nothing can be done without the involvement of the mind. But did he elaborate further about the Ayatan (the body, residence, form or shape) of this Mana as a personification of Brahm as well as about its Pratistha (established glory, majesty, grandeur, dignity, esteem and visible fame)²'?

Janak replied, 'No, he didn't'.

Yagyavalkya chided him, 'Oh king! What he preached you then is incomplete knowledge'.

Janak requested the sage, 'Then oh sage, would you please elaborate upon it?'.

Yagyavalkya then preached Janak, 'The Ayatan of the Mana (mind) is the Mana itself³, and its Pratistha is the Akash (space or sky)⁴'.

One should honour and worship the Mana as an embodiment of 'Anand' (i.e. of bliss and happiness) because it is the Mana which decides whether or not one feels happy and blissful under any given set of circumstances'.

Janak enquired, 'What is Anand (i.e. being blissful, contented and happy)?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Oh king! The Mana is an embodiment of Anand; it is the Mana that determines the degree of blissfulness, contentedness and happiness that a man possesses. It is by the Mana that a man desires to have the company of a woman, and their union produces a son who represents the culmination of that union and this son is a source of Anand (happiness, contentedness, satisfaction and blissfulness) for the parents. Oh emperor! The Mana is indeed Brahm (because Brahm is an embodiment of beatitude and felicity). A person who worships, honours and reveres the Mana as a manifestation of Brahm, or as an embodiment of the virtues of Brahm, the Mana never abandons him⁵'.

All living beings treat him favourable and honorably. He is elevated to the stature of Gods and is revered as such'.

Videha Janak was pleased by this discourse and he said, 'Oh sage! I donate one thousand cows to you. They will bear calves (bulls) that would be as strong and robust as elephants'.

Yagyavalkya showed his reluctance to accept this reward, saying, 'No king. My father believed (and so do I) that a teacher should not accept any alms or charities (as fees) from his disciple or student without imparting a full and comprehensive knowledge to him. Hence, I decline to accept your offer because what I have told you just now is not the complete picture of Brahm (6).

[Note—¹The *Mana* or mind is obviously the seat of all wisdom, intelligence, thoughts and faculties that control all the perceptions and actions in the body of the living creature. It is the seat of power just like we have an emperor's seat. But it is not the physical seat or throne that actually does anything, but the person who occupies it. In the present case, that divine authority and almighty power is Brahm. Therefore, the Mana is the Ayatan of Brahm. The mind is the only organ in the body that enables the creature to think and remember intelligently. It is the mind that controls the all the functioning of the rest of the organs though it does not appear to do anything itself just like Brahm that does not seem to do anything but is behind all activities in this

creation. The mind is a subtle entity which cannot be felt or seen; the functions of the body are carried on by the gross organs of perception such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and gross organs of actions such as hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory. But who controls them? Surely and incontrovertibly it's the Mana or mind. Further, the behaviour and temperaments of a man, his various desires, aspirations, hopes and expectations are also controlled by the mind as much as his different tendencies and worldly attachments. It is the mind that is responsible for deluding the man into believing that the entire external material world is true and real, and is therefore responsible for trapping him into the bog of illusions and delusions. And fortunately it is the mind itself that can enlighten him about his errors and follies about this illusory conception and ignite the quest for the truth in him. It is the mind that would fructify this quest and lead the man on the supreme path of truth and away from falsehood. It is the mind that would help him sustain himself in his spiritual endeavour by helping him to be steady and diligent and preventing his fall by temptations.

It is the mind that is the fount of all wisdom, erudition, knowledge, expertise, skills, scholarship and enlightenment. Therefore, the Mana or mind is truthfully Brahm personified. It is therefore also the Pratistha of Brahm.

The importance of Mana or mind has been elaborately explained, inter alia, in Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse nos. 4-7, 9, 12; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse nos. 20 ; and Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse nos. 10-17 of this Upanishad.

²The concept of *Ayatan* and *Pratistha* has been explained in detail in verse no.1 above. Since the mind personifies Brahm, it is the Ayatan of the latter because the physical presence of Brahm is manifested in the form in which the subtle mind is present. The mind is Brahm's Pratistha because it establishes the stupendous and magnificent glories and potentials of Brahm for all to see and witness.

³ This is because the grand virtues of wisdom, erudition, intelligence, discrimination and rational thoughts symbolising the stupendous qualities that are unique attributes of Brahm personified as Mana are present only in the subtle organ of the body known as the Mana or the mind-intellect apparatus.

⁴The reach of the mind has no end—it can think of even those things that ordinarily cannot be thought of; it can go to places where the body can never imagine going. The mind can also dwell in events of the past, and this would affect a person's behaviour in the present, and consequently the future. Hence, the realm and sweeping reach of the Mana or mind is as wide, broad and fathomless, as infinite and measureless as the *Akash* or sky/space. Besides this point, it is a well established tenet of Vedanta that Brahm is synonymous with the Akash and is uniformly diffused throughout the sky so much so that it is impossible to segregate them much like it is impossible to separate salt after it is dissolved in water. The unique qualities of Brahm and Akash are similar in many ways as follows—they are infinite, eternal, uncorrupt, pristine pure, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. The sky element is the nearest analogue to Brahm because it is the subtlest of the five elements in creation. Everything in creation came into being in the bowl of the sky, lives in this bowl and would perish in it, but this sky would be there even after that. All these unique attributes of the sky are like the grand attributes of Brahm on display, making the Akash the Pratistha of Brahm. Since Brahm lives in the sky element, the latter is the Ayatan of the former.

⁵That is, since he treats his mind as the manifestation of the supreme Lord of creation who is most holy, pure and exalted, he never allows evil thoughts to enter his mind; he never allows his Mana to veer towards evils and vices. Such a man would also treat everything and everyone with equanimity and fortitude, with equal love and compassion. This gives him immense peace, bliss, contentedness and happiness.]

7. Yagyavalkya continued with his preaching. He asked Janak, ‘Tell me whatever knowledge about Brahm that any other wise teacher (besides the ones you have mentioned earlier) might have given you’.

Janak replied, ‘Vidagdth Shakalya has taught me that the Heart is Brahm¹’.

Yagyavalkya said, ‘Just like anyone who is fortunate enough to be wisely taught by his mother, father and Guru (teacher), what he had said about the heart being Brahm is indeed true because a man ‘without a heart’ is not able to do anything²’.

But did he tell you about the Ayatan (the body, residence, form or shape) of this subtle entity called the heart, along with its Pratistha (established glory, majesty, grandeur, dignity, esteem and visible fame)?’

Janak replied, ‘No, he didn’t’.

Yagyavalkya brushed aside this knowledge as half baked. He said, ‘Oh king! This is an incomplete knowledge!’

Janak enquired, ‘Then oh sage, what is the complete knowledge?’

Yagyavalkya preached him, ‘The Ayatan of the Hridya (subtle heart) is the (physical) heart itself, and its Pratistha is the Akash (the subtle sky element)³’.

One should adore, honour and show respect to the ‘heart’ with the view that it occupies an exalted position much like the citadel where the supreme Authority or Emperor lives’.

Janak asked the sage, ‘What do you mean by saying this?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The heart marks the exalted and revered position or establishment of all living beings. The famed virtues of the heart, such as love, compassion, kindness, magnanimity, graciousness, broadness, benevolence, softness, sweetness etc., help to establish the glory of a person. These eclectic virtues/qualities establish him in society. The heart is therefore the Pratistha of all creatures. All living beings/creatures/men find their succour and solace in their heart; they rely upon their heart to establish their glory and fame⁴. A person who treats the heart as a residence of Brahm where he has manifested himself—or as Brahm’s ‘Ayatan’, and adores, honours and reveres it as such is never abandoned by the heart; the heart never forsakes him⁵’.

All the creatures respect a wise and learned man, and he is elevated to the exalted position which is similar to that of any revered God. That is, such a person is admired, honoured and paid respects by others who regard him as being no less than a God because he is endowed with the grand and noble virtues that are characteristics of the greatness of the heart—such as being compassionate, merciful, considerate, kind and graceful, being loving and caring, being magnanimous and benevolent—all the divine attributes possessed by a person who has a broad and noble heart⁶’.

Janak was very pleased, and he wished to reward the sage (for his erudition). So he said, ‘Oh sage! I hereby donate to you one thousand healthy cows who would bring forth calves (bulls) who would be as strong and robust as elephants’.

Yagyavalkya declined to accept the offer, saying, ‘My father believed that unless the teacher gives a complete and comprehensive knowledge to his disciple or student, he should not accept any kind of reward or remuneration. So I will not accept it because the teaching is yet not complete’ (7).

[Note—¹The *heart* has been extolled as the seat of the supreme pure consciousness known as the Atma or the soul of a creature. This Atma is universally regarded as Brahm personified in its microcosmic form that dwells in the heart of the individual creature. Yoga Upanishads describe heart variously as being shaped like a divine Swan, a deep cavernous abode as well as a multi-petalled Lotus of different colours where the Supreme Being lives in the form of the Atma. The heart is the center of

such grand virtues as compassion, mercy, magnanimity and kindness which are the hallmarks of the supreme authority of creation known as Brahm. The importance and significance of the heart has been elaborately described, inter alia, in Canto 3, Brahmin 2, verse no 7; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 20; and Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse nos. 10-26 of this Upanishad.

²There are three obvious *reasons* for this--One is the very obvious fact that a man without a physical heart can never 'live' to do anything for he would die immediately. The second obvious reason is that without a heart he will have no emotional involvement with his work and therefore the work done 'half-heartedly' would be just that, i.e. it would be half-baked and incomplete as he would lack the sentimental and emotional inspiration and backing required for successfully accomplishing any task, he would lack the tenacity and drive to stick to any job, because a person is more inclined to stick to anything in which he is emotionally and sentimentally involved; in other words, a person likes to dwell on those subjects or do those jobs in which his heart finds its interest and rest, though at times his intellect—his wise and intelligent Mana—might tell him that it is not so good for him. And third is a lack of sentiments and such noble humane values as having compassion, magnanimity, mercy, kindness, forgiveness, fortitude and tolerance makes him unwelcome anywhere he goes and thus he becomes unsuitable to interact with other people. They become hostile to him and would cause hindrance and create obstacles in his path instead of cooperating with him.

³The concept of *Ayatan* and *Pratistha* has been elaborated upon earlier in verse nos. 1 above. Brahm lives in the heart as the Atma, and therefore the heart is Brahm's 'Ayatan' or dwelling place. The heart showcases the divine and radiant glories as well as the magnificent, divine and eclectic virtues of Brahm, and so it is Brahm's 'Pratistha'. Amongst the various forms of the *Akash* or sky element, according to metaphysics, is the 'Hridyakash'—the subtle sky present around the subtle heart, or the subtle space that encloses the tissue of the heart and is present in all available place not occupied by any gross part of this organ such as the arteries, veins, valves etc. This sky is different from the sky or Akash present outside the body in the form of the physical and gross form of the sky element.

It must be noted here that this statement of Yagyavalkya answers the question of Shakalya before he was cursed by the sage. See Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 24.

⁴The *heart* decides whether or not one remains engrossed or involved emotionally and sentimentally in any job or on any subject, no matter how important or otherwise it is. The heart also decides for how long such involvement should be. If the heart finds attachment to anything, the person will stick to it though the mind might disapprove of this attachment. For example, when a man loves a woman, he goes to great lengths to please her, be with her, and to acquire her attention, though his mind might tell him that he is courting trouble. Such a man will not think of the consequences of his involvement with a woman, because his heart dominated his being. A man who is emotionally infatuated with a woman would be found in her company; he would like to spend most of his time with her. If anyone wants to find out where he is, and asks others about this passionate and lustful man's location, he is told that he would be found in the company of a woman. Therefore, the man is found or established or positioned where his heart is. The heart supersedes the mind and intellect. In this example, the Ayatan of the heart of a lustful man is the woman, while his infamy as a libidinous and promiscuous man becomes his negative Pratistha.

⁵The *heart* has a natural tendency to be merciful, compassionate, loving, caring, magnanimous, tolerant, gracious, kind and considerate—all the virtues possessed also by *Brahm*. Hence it is deemed to be like Brahm himself; Brahm is said to be a resident of this heart which possess these qualities. It is also broad and fathomless in its emotional and sentimental reach just like Brahm. That is why we have the term 'a broad-hearted' person, just like we have the term 'a broad-minded' person. Only Brahm has this quality of having a dimension that can be categorised as 'broad and

wide, fathomless, measureless and infinite'. These terms have no physical limitations, because 'broad and wide' and 'fathomless and measureless' can mean an infinite dimension of space and time.

⁶ 'Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears' (Holy Bible, Acts, 20/19.); 'Some have compassion, making a difference' (Holy Bible, Jude, 22.); 'Glory, honour and peace to everyman that worketh good' (Holy Bible, Romans, 2/10.); 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in you?' (Holy Bible, Corinthians, 1/3/8.); 'I will dwell in them and walk with them' (Holy Bible, Corinthians, 11/6/16.); 'We are (all) the children of God' (Holy Bible, Romans, 8/16.); 'If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another' (Holy Bible, John, 1/4/11.); 'We ought to support the weak' (Holy Bible, Acts, 20/35.)]

Canto 4, Brahmin 2

1. Being humbled by the erudition and wisdom of sage Yagyavalkya, Janak got up from his majesty's seat (i.e. his throne) and expressed his thankfulness to the sage, saying, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! I bow before you. Please be kind to preach me further'.

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Oh king! Even as a man takes the help of a boat or a chariot to cover long distances, you too have taken the help of the Upanishads to become aware of the different manifestations of Brahm and have thereby been able to focus your mind on your pure conscious self which is your Atma. You have become self-realised and enlightened about the supreme transcendental Brahm as well as the pure conscious Atma. Consequentially, you have achieved the so-called four glories—you have become worthy of being revered and honoured by others, you have become exalted, you are deemed to have studied the Vedas and their tenets, and therefore have become self-realised, wise, enlightened and learned, and you are deemed to be one who has been fortunate enough to be taught on the principles of the Upanishads by an erudite teacher. But despite being honoured with all these glorious feats, i.e. although you are so wise, sagacious, erudite, enlightened and self-realised, say, do you know where you would go after you discard your body (i.e. after your death)?'

Janak replied, 'No sage, I do not know'.

Yagyavalkya then told him, 'Well then, I shall now tell you the destination where you go when you leave your body (after death)'.

Janak pleaded, 'Oh Lord! Do tell me about it' (1).

[Note—Refer also to Canto 3, Brahmin 2, verse no. 13 in this context.]

2. (Yagyavalkya replied to Janak as follows--) The Purush (i.e. the resident supreme Brahm) that resides in the right eye of a man (as this organ's conscious factor and the vital element that enables this eye to carry on with its function of seeing, or in other words as the perception of sight) is called Indha. [The word literally means 'fuel for fire'. Here it implies that this Brahm is the all-important conscious power that keeps the faculty of sight located in the organ of the eye functioning properly. It helps the light of the eye lighted and burning so that the eyes can actually see and register the sights seen, instead of just looking at them blankly, just staring at them stupidly.]

2. This Purush, known as Indha, is also known as Indra, the king of Gods. [This is because the faculty of sight is the best faculty in a man as it lights up the world for him. All other organs depend upon the proper functioning of the eye to remain comfortable. That is why, when we can't see, the entire being of the man becomes

agitated and restless. He is overcome by fear of uncertainty. No amount of wisdom and knowledge, or for that matter the best of performances of all other organs, can ever replace the benefit derived by the proper working of the eye.]

All the faculties in the body are personified as one or the other God who represent the different powerful forces of Nature and creation that drive the body of the creature in the form of these faculties. Therefore, it is apt to call this Purush in the right eye, known as Indha, as Indra—their king, because it is superior to them.

Meanwhile, the Gods prefer to remain hidden and out of sight; they wish to remain anonymous. So they prefer to honour that Supreme Being (Brahm) as the subtle power that remains hidden and concealed in the cave-like hollow of the eye, but nevertheless lights up the world for them by the illumination which radiates out from him [2].

[Note—¹The supreme transcendental Brahm has manifested himself as the faculty of sight and taken up residence in the *eye*. Therefore, the eye is called his Ayatan (residence and dwelling place), and the glory that this eye represents, the majestic virtue that removes darkness and generates light virtually from nothing, as if by magic, is known as sight and it is this Brahm's Pratistha—this concept has been elaborately elucidated upon in Brahmin 1, verse no. 4 of this Canto no. 4 earlier. Please also refer to Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 12; Canto 2, Brahmin 3, verse no. 5-6; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 12; and Canto 5, Brahmin 10.

The supreme Brahm represents 'light' in all its magnificent and glorious connotations. This 'light' is not merely physical light like that of a torch, but includes such grand and eclectic virtues in its ambit as wisdom, erudition, enlightenment etc. But in the present context we shall use the meaning 'light that shines and lights up the otherwise dark world for the creature to see it'. The eye is the only organ that can carry out this function. The eye itself is part of the lifeless gross body like other organs, so that Authority which injects the miraculous power to see in this apparently lifeless organ, injecting consciousness and life into it, is definitely not an ordinary Authority. This ability of the eye to see, i.e. its faculty of sight, its ability to perceive the different shapes, sizes and colours etc. of various objects, in brief to witness the actual existence of a visible world first hand, is possible because of the mystical presence of some unknown supernatural power subtly and secretly ensconced inside it. Shorn of this mystical power, the eyes would go blank. The best way to observe it is in a blind man—his physical organ called the eye is there, but he can't see. So, this inherent power of the eye to see, that keeps the faculty of sight functioning in its prime form, is called Indha. This is because it is like the fuel that keeps the fire burning in the fire pit. It is like the electric that keeps the bulb lighted. The eye is its manifested form, its subtle body is the faculty of sight, and the consciousness that enables the eye to see is the Purush we're talking about.

The eye is the microcosmic gross body of the Brahm who lives in it as the Purush that enables the eyes to see. The Sun, on the other hand, is Brahm's macrocosmic gross body; it is Brahm's cosmic eye. That is why, the Sun God is said to have taken up his symbolic residence in the eye of the creature. Both serve the same function, and both have the same Purush residing in them. See also Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 2 in this context.

Since 'sight' is the most important blessing that the Supreme Being has bestowed upon his creation because without the eye the world would be a dark, gloomy and forebodingly fearful place to live, this faculty that enables the creature to see and remove darkness is called the king amongst the various other faculties that the living being possesses such as the faculties of hearing, smelling, tasting and touching or feeling. This is why the personification of this most important faculty of seeing is regarded as Indra who is the king of Gods, while all the other faculties are personified as different Gods.

²There is another interpretation of this verse. At the time of creation, the Sun God called Aditya had taken up residence in the eye; this fact is borne by verse no. 20 of Canto 3, Brahmin 9. The sun is the brightest and most visible entity in the sky, and it personifies the virtues of Brahm that lightens up the world and provides it with the much needed energy and heat to sustain itself and survive. The sun is indeed like a cauldron of fire; it appears to be like a cosmic pitcher full of some boiling cosmic liquid—therefore it is Indha (Purush) personified because the word Indha means ‘fuel for fire’; this is a figure of speech to indicate the presence of the Viraat Purush in the body of the sun which is energised by his presence and then burns like a cosmic fire to give light and heat to the rest of the realm. It gives out bright and splendid light and it is the most evident manifestation or revelation of the supreme Purush—refer Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 2; Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse no. 5; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 9; and verse no. 2 of Canto 5, Brahmin 5.

³According to the great sage Adi Shankaracharya’s commentary on this Upanishad, the cosmic energy and vitality represented by this ‘fire element’ present in the sun which gives it its light, energy and heat, and which is the source of all that exists is called the ‘Vaishwanar Atma’ which in turn has been depicted to be dwelling in the right eye in this verse.

⁴The *Gods* are manifestations of the different subtle faculties and divine sublime virtues present in a man. Since all these are in a subtle form, it is deemed that the Gods prefer to remain anonymous and act behind the scene much like the ministers of the king who remain behind the scene but are the actual performers at the ground level and the ones who actually act on behalf of the king. The various organs of the body are like the different departments and wings of the government which forms its external façade and which come in contact with the public in daily life, but the officials and ministers who drive these departments and wings are hidden from view.]

3. The entity known as the Purush (i.e. the Supreme Being present as the vital signs of life; the consciousness) present in the left eye is the counterpart or the other half of Indra (who is present in the right eye— see verse no. 2). This Purush is called Viraat¹.

These two— Indra and Viraat— meet each other (as husband and wife) in the Akash (space or sky) present in the heart of an individual².

This subtle space or sky around the heart is called the ‘Hridya-Akash’. The red coloured rounded mass present as the body known as the ‘heart’ is what they feed upon; it is their food; it is upon it that they survive and sustain themselves³.

The web/net of capillaries and veins present in the heart form their latticed wearing apparel⁴.

The Naadis (literally the tubular ducts present in the body; here referring to the capillaries, veins and nerves) going in the upward direction from the heart resemble the pathway through which these two (Indra and Viraat) move. There are Naadis (capillaries, veins and nerves) called Hita present inside the heart; these are ultra fine in diameter and measure a thousandth part of an ordinary hair follicle. These Naadis called Hita take food (i.e. the elementary nutrients) to all the parts of the body⁵.

This is why the subtle body of the creature (known as its Linga-Deha or Taijas) accepts only microscopic (molecular) forms of food because the grosser aspects of food is taken to other parts of the gross body (called the Vishwa)⁶ (3).

[Note—¹As we have seen in verse no. 1 above, the word Purush means someone who resides somewhere, though technically it means a ‘male’. If the right eye is the symbolic abode of the emperor known as Indra representing the supreme authority known as Brahm who is called a Purush simply because he resides in the dwelling called the right eye, then obviously the so-called ‘other half’ of Brahm is also called a Purush as it ‘resides’ in the left eye. The attributeless and invisible supreme Brahm is indivisible and immutable cosmic consciousness of creation, called its Atma or the

cosmic Soul. When Brahm decided to initiate the process of creation, he manifested himself in his own image—viz. as the Viraat Purush. This Viraat Purush was the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. The word ‘Viraat’ means vast and colossus, while ‘Purush’ has twin meaning here—i.e. the Brahm residing in this cosmic gross body, and the primary Male aspect of creation. Why a male? It is because the vital spark needed to initiate the process of creation, i.e. the ‘sperm’, can be produced by a male! Since there was no female where this sperm could be implanted, the Viraat Purush simply had to metamorphose himself into this vast visible creation. There are different versions of creation which is not the subject to be discussed here.

However, when Brahm took up residence in the left eye, it was called ‘Viraat’ because this so-called ‘other half’ or counterpart of Brahm symbolically represented the Viraat Purush of creation as described above.

It is well established that both the eyes complement each other like a husband and wife pair. If one is damaged, the other also suffers. If we hit one eye, the other eye closes automatically in an involuntary response. This is what is meant by saying that the Purush, representing the power to see which is inherent to the eye and lends the eye its importance and magnificence, residing in the right eye is like the husband or counterpart of the Purush representing the power to see present in the left eye. In other words, both the eyes complement each other.

²The heart has been traditionally associated with the notion of love and affection. When two persons love each other very fondly, they literally stay in close company. In the present context, the two eyes work in sync with each other like a pair of husband and wife do. Brahm or Indra in the right eye is the Lord, and he works in conjunction with the Viraat or his symbolic wife or consort or counterpart present in the left eye even as the two eyes work together to see the world. The mutual coordination is so perfect that both eyes see the same thing—it is not that one eye sees red and the other sees green.

³The heart is the epicenter of emotions and sentiments. It is also the residence of the pure consciousness called the Atma of the individual creature which is in turn a manifestation of the cosmic Atma or Soul called Brahm. Now, an alive and beating heart is present in a living creature and not in a dead entity. Whatever is eaten by a creature is divided into two parts—the heavy and gross which moves downwards to be excreted, and the subtle and sublime which again is split into two. Its medium aspect is converted into red blood and other vital nutrients that support and sustain the gross body of the creature, while its subtlest part nourishes the emotions and sentiments of a creature.

Therefore symbolically, the couple represented by Indra and Viraat survive when the heart is ‘well fed’, which is a metaphoric way of saying that the heart gets its proper dose of nutrition in the form of auspicious and righteous emotions and sentiments, when the creature endeavours to cultivate noble virtues and purge ignoble ones from its heart.

A natural spin off of this view is that the man should be careful of what kind of food he eats because if the food is impure, the nourishment derived from it would also be tainted, thereby causing ailment and ill-health for Indra and Viraat who live in his eyes and move around in the subtle space around the heart, i.e. in the Hridaya-Akash as noted above. In other words, his vision would become corrupt and he would be prevented from seeing or perceiving things in the correct perspective. At the same time his heart would also become corrupt and he would be ‘heartless’, i.e. he would lack all the fine and grand virtues that are associated with the heart such as being compassionate, kind, merciful, considerate, forgiving, tolerant and fortitudinous. This chain would be detrimental for his spiritual growth and upliftment.

⁴The supreme Brahm is called ‘Indra’ when he decides to enjoy the visible world he has created because to do so he has to take up physical residence in a physical gross body that lives in this physical, visible world. In this context, the word ‘Indra’ would mean the Lord of the sense organs because this word is derived from the word

for sense organs, i.e. 'Indri'. So, this Indra representing Brahm is the so-called 'Ling-Atma' or the sublime ethereal soul of the 'Ling-Deha' which is the ethereal form of the corporeal body of the creature, which would be the Viraat Purush in the present context. Where does the Atma live? In the heart of course, and the heart is a mesh of capillaries and veins.

⁵It is a well established fact that whatever is eaten by a man is digested and then the nutrients are taken to all the parts of the body by the means of the blood flowing in the network of veins and capillaries. The pumping station of the blood is the heart from where the veins and capillaries radiate to all the parts of the body. The consciousness present in the heart represents the supreme Purush mentioned here, and this Purush keeps necessary food for his own use and sends the remaining part of it to other parts of the body through the network of Naadis. These Naadis are called Hita because the word refers to someone who is helpful and favourable; someone who is benign and benevolent instead of being in opposition, malignant and malevolent.

The food that is eaten by a man splits into to parts as noted earlier— the gross part passes out as urine and faecal matters. The subtle part helps to sustain the gross body —the flesh, muscles, bones, skin and other organs, while those constituent parts of the food eaten which are subtler in nature, the parts known as the quality or Guna present in the food, sustain this Linga-Deha of the creature. These Gunas of three types —Sata Guna which are noble and virtuous qualities present in the food and when transferred to the creature make him possessed of these qualities and virtues; Raja Guna are those quality which are predominantly oriented towards worldly involvement, and Tama Guna are those qualities which are considered lowly, mean and pervert. These three form the cover or a cloak or attire in the form of the mesh or web which cover the Taijas as described in this verse. Now, even as a man is recognized by the physical clothes he wears, these Gunas help to determine the external character and nature of a creature. That is why we say that the food eaten affects the temperament, nature and habits of a person; the food eaten determines his over-all character and personality, his mental setup and temperament. If the food is obtained by unrighteous and inauspicious means, then it is bound to have its effect on the psychology of the person who is eating this corrupted and polluted food.

⁶The gross body of the living creature is a living manifestation and an image of Brahm. The former is called Vishwa (world) because it relates to the external world at large, and the living entity present in it is its subtle body known as Taijas because it exhibits the splendorous glories and majestic powers and energies of Brahm called the 'Tej of Brahm'. Again, since this subtle body represents the different virtues and qualities that a man possesses and are an integral part of his nature and temperament, as well as the divine radiance, energy, vitality, vigour and other subtle and sublime attributes of Brahm that he exhibits, it is ascribed the epithet 'Taijas' meaning glorious and radiant, energetic and vigorous. This is the setup at the micro level of the individual creature. At the level of the cosmos, the gross body of Brahm is known as Viraat Purush and the subtle body is known as Hiranyagarbha which refers to the energetic and radiant cosmic egg from which the Viraat had emerged.

As has been noted above in note no. 3, the heavier aspects of food are meant for the gross body, while its subtler parts are meant for the subtle body. Since the subtle body represented by the man's inherent qualities and attributes such as his energy, vitality, vigour, strength, radiance and stamina etc. are present in him in an imperceptible, sublime and subtle form, they are nourished by that aspect of food which comply with its requirements. The vitality and vigour and energy shown by a man are also metaphors for Pran or vital winds representing 'life' in him. This Pran flows in the Naadis as has been clearly mentioned in the Upanishads dealing on this subject. Hence, this verse says that the Pran living as the Indra in the subtle body of the creature's gross body accepts subtle forms of food. When properly nourished, this subtle body also keeps the gross body properly functioning, and vice versa. In other

words, they act like ‘couples’ working together towards a common goal—which is to sustain the innocent child, the pure and uncorrupt Atma, residing in their bosom.]

4. For an enlightened and wise person, the eastern direction is like his eastern Pran; the southern direction is the southern Pran, the west is like the western Pran, the north is like the northern Pran, the upper direction represents his upper Pran, the lower direction represents his lower Pran, and all the directions taken together symbolise the composite nature of his Pran¹.

That pure conscious, enigmatic, intangible and astounding Atma which is described or defined by the words ‘Neti-neti’², which means ‘not so-not so, or neither this nor that’, is beyond grasp and comprehension; it is imperishable and eternal, and is beyond the tentacles of ruin, decay and destruction. It is without any attachments and shackles. It is never harmed, injured or tormented in any way. In short, it is beyond such negative, denigrating and demeaning notions that are applicable to other things that exist in this mortal creation.

Oh Janak! It is certain that you have become fearless, so be rest assured of it³.

Videha Janak was overcome with gratitude. He said, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! You have taught me about Brahm as well as the Atma and Pran) which makes a man indeed fearless (from the fears of this mortal world and its inherent torments and shackling effects). So, you be blessed yourself; you be fearless yourself. I most reverentially bow before you to pay my greatest of respects. The country called Videha and myself are at your service⁴’ (4).

[Note--¹That is, a wise and enlightened person has a broad perspective and holistic view of things. He is not self-centered and selfish. His view-points are never shortsighted and narrow. If those to his right direction suffer in any manner, such people think that the right half of their own self is suffering. This applies to all the other directions as well. This is a holistic approach to showing respect for the Pran which is synonym for the pure conscious Atma present inside the heart of a man. Such a person sees no duality or distinction between himself and other.

²The concept of *Atma* being such a stupendous entity that it can never be tangibly grasped and intelligently understood and therefore articulately described has been the matter of all Upanishadic teaching and research. Please also refer Canto 2, Brahmin 3, verse no. 6. It is called the ‘truth of the Truth’—refer Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no.20.

³This is because Janak had become enlightened about the true nature of his pure ‘self’ which is not his physical perishable body but his Atma which is imperishable. So the very cause of fear is not there—the Atma does not die, it does not decay, it is not harmed, it is not injured, and it is bliss personified. It is the body that is subjected to all these things, and the body is not the true self.

⁴We must note that in the previous chapter, Janak had offered so many cows to Yagyavalkya at every pause, i.e. at every question the king had offered one thousands cows to Yagyavalkya. But now, when he had become truly enlightened, he simply expressed his thankfulness to the sage by bowing before him instead of offering him material wealth in the form of the cow. The idea is obvious —worldly wealth cannot adequately pay or compensate for spiritual upliftment; no amount of remuneration can ever compensate the teacher for the spiritual guidance that he gives to his disciples. A wise teacher is one who does not hanker for material gain in return for the knowledge that he has imparted to his eager and sincere disciple or student. This is a far cry from the crass commercialisation of education in the world of today. And that is why there is so much moral turpitude in today’s world where neither the disciple nor his teacher has any respect for the other. We may go to the moon or mars, but we cannot rise an inch in the spiritual sphere if we hanker for material benefits instead of spiritual benefits.]

Canto 4, Brahmin 3

1. On some other occasion, sage Yagyavalkya came to visit king Videha Janak. He had decided before coming that he would not speak anything. But it so happened that on some previous occasion during some fire sacrifice ritual, the sage had given the king the right to ask any question the latter wished to be answered. So the king recalled that promise and began the metaphysical discussion (1).

2. King Janak asked, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! What kind of light (Jyoti) emanates from the Purush¹?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'Oh king! The Purush is provided with or is empowered with the light of Aditya (the Sun God). [That is, the Supreme Being shines brightly like the celestial sun in the sky. The Sun is used incidentally as a synonym of this Supreme Being, and like this celestial sun in the sky, this Supreme Being also gives 'light' and the energy to sustain 'life' in the entire creation.] It is due to the light provided by Aditya that a man gets established; it is with the help of the light of Aditya that he goes in all the four directions, does all the deeds, and then comes back to his original place^{2*}.

Janak conceded, 'Yes, it is indeed so' (2).

[Note—¹By using the word *Purush* king Janak means both the Viraat Purush who is the macrocosmic revelation of the supreme transcendental Brahm at the cosmic level as well as the individual man (any living being) at the micro level. The word *Jyoti* literally means light, but here it refers to the faculty of sight which is located in the eye of the gross body of the man as well as the faculty of intelligence located in the mind forming the subtle body. A man 'sees' with the light present in his eye; it is this light that lightens up the external world for him. The sight of wisdom, sagacity, erudition and intelligence present in his mind enables him to 'see' and decipher intelligently what is imperceptible and intangible for the gross eye of the body to see. They work in tandem to make a man see holistically this world. Whereas he is able to see physical things with the light present in his gross eye, the light of wisdom is his insight and window into the realm of the esoteric and mystical aspects of creation, such as the concept of the Spirit/Atma/Soul.

So, in essence, Janak wishes to know about that light which enables the Viraat Purush to light the world so that it can be seen by the creature, as well as the light that provides the creature with its ability to see and have insight.

²The celestial Sun is like the eye of the cosmic Purush. This Sun lights up the vast realm of the world for the benefit of the creature, because had it not been for the light provided by the Sun, the world would have been a dark and foreboding place to live. This same Sun personified as a God symbolically resides in the eye of the man as the faculty of sight. This faculty enables a person to move around in this world and do all his deeds independently, without asking for anybody's help. He goes to distant places because he can see with the 'light' present in his eye as well as the light present outside to show him the way, he does so many tasks because he can see with this light and has the light of intelligence and information regarding the task at hand to guide him in his endeavour, and finally when the task is accomplished he retraces his steps back home because he can see with the same light. He can read and study with the help of his eye; he can guide and lead other people to a particular destination because he is able to have foresight and insight into the future and its unseen opportunities. People seek his wise advice and guidance. Therefore he is said to be established and renowned as a 'wise master' who has a deep 'insight' into every aspect of the matter

and has the necessary 'foresight' to guide others in every matter. Therefore we observe that there is a double meaning and significance of the word *Jyoti* meaning 'light' represented by its patron God known as *Aditya* or the Sun God in this verse. See also Canto 4, Brahmin 2, verse no. 2.

*Metaphorically, this verse refers to the 'waking state of consciousness' of the creature, called the 'Jagrat' state. There are four states in which a creature lives—viz. waking, dreaming, deep sleeping and Turiya or the transcendental state. Briefly, during the waking state, as the name suggests, the creature is awake in this physical world and sees it with his open eyes. It does physical activities during this state with its gross body, and all its sense organs are active. This concept has been elucidated in verse nos. 17 and 31 below.]

3. Janak asked once again, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! After the Sun has set, what gives Jyoti (light) to the Purush (i.e. the living being/a man/a creature)¹?

Yagyavalkya answered, 'At that time, the Moon provides him with light. It is in the moon's light that the person is established, goes here and there, does all his work and then comes back^{2*},'.

Janak agreed, 'Yes, it is so' (3).

[Note—¹The explanation given is respect to the Sun in verse no. 1 also applies here. The celestial moon lights up the dark night for the benefit of the creature. That is, even in the absence of the sun's light represented by the opened eyes during the day time, a person still can perform all the deeds in the night hours that he would normally have done during the daytime. The moon's light helps him to perform many deeds during the night. This is the gross aspect of the moon's light.

Now, personified as a God, this moon lives in the 'Mana' (the heart and the emotive mind) of a creature. When the eyes are closed, a person can use his Mana, i.e. his imagination and the creative powers of his mind and heart to do so many things, have so many desires and aspirations, make so many plans, and instruct others on so many issues which are relevant and dear to him. Further, when a man is asleep, he dreams. During the dream, the Mana plays an active role, and the person lives in a world of its own, doing deeds and accomplishing even the most difficult of tasks that he wouldn't have possible done while awake as represented by the day time when the eyes are open and the sun is shining brightly.

When he wakes up from his dream represented by the time when the moon is shining during the night, or when he opens his eyes so that the light of the sun lights up the world for him, he virtually comes back from the world of his dream where his path was lighted by the light emanating from the moon who is the patron deity of the Mana.

Another connotation is that when he sleeps, i.e. when his eyes are closed, he dreams, and in his dreams he behaves as if he was in the actual world doing this and that. But during that plane of existence, it is his subconscious mind that is showing the 'light' to him.

²At a more worldly plane, the moonlight is sufficient to allow village dwellers to go from one place to another, do their night chores in the fields and return home early morning to catch a little sleep before the toil of the next day begins. Even long distance travelers prefer to travel during the night when the moon shines because of cooler climes, instead of traveling during the hot day when the sun is relentlessly beating down upon the earth.

*The state which is referred to here is the 'dreaming state of consciousness' during sleep. The man is asleep during the night as represented by his closed eye and the setting of the sun. During this state, the physical organs are not active, but the Mana is as active as before. Since the patron deity of the Mana is the Moon God, the former is inspired by the latter. The dreamer does all the things with is ethereal body what he would have done with his corporeal body while awake. This state is called

‘Swapna’. As far as the Atma is concerned, the activities do not cease. Verse nos. 10-13, 16, 20 deal with this state.]

4. Janak persisted with his enquiry, ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! When both the sun and the moon set (symbolised by the dark moon’s night), what gives light to the Purush (i.e. the cosmic Viraat as well as the individual person)¹?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘At that time, it is the ‘Fire’ (element) that gives light to him. He sits, moves, does various deeds and comes back with the help of the light provided by the burning fire^{2*}’.

Janak agreed, ‘Yes, it is so’ (4).

[Note—¹The meaning and significance of the words *Purush* and *light* have been explained in verse no. 1 above. When a man goes beyond the dreaming state of consciousness while asleep, i.e. when he enters the deep sleep state, he lies like a log of wood—completely lifeless for all practical purposes. He neither has any emotive reaction to this physical world, nor does he dream and have any emotive involvement with his world of dreams.

²But the *fire* inherently and eternally burning inside his gross body keeps him alive and the body warm. Therefore, all those factors which depend upon the ‘fire element’ and are subtle signs or yardsticks of life continue to thrive inside the body even though the man is virtually dead externally because all his external organs have become dysfunctional, and even his mind has stopped functioning—viz. he continues to digest food, circulate blood, manufacture urine and faecal matter, the heart keeps throbbing, the brain, liver and other vital tissues continue their function. In short, the subtle Linga-Deha of the creature, i.e. the invisible ethereal form of his corporeal body is very much active in the light and energy provided by the ‘fire element’ inherently present inside him.

At a more mundane worldly plane we find that in villages, people light a community fire around which they sit and discuss the events of their lives. In forest, travelers use a burning torch to traverse forest paths where there is no light, neither of the sun nor of the moon.

*The state of consciousness referred here is called the ‘deep sleep state of consciousness’. Here even the mind ceases to function along with the physical body. This state lies beyond the dreaming state and is the third state called ‘Sushupta’. Verse nos. 14-15, 21-30 below deal with this concept.]

5. Janak’s next question was— ‘Oh Yagyavalkya! Now when the sun and the moon are set and there is even no light of the fire, say what then gives ‘light’ to the Purush (man)?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘In such circumstances, the ‘Vak’ (the faculty of speech, the voice and the power to speak) shows the ‘light’ to the man¹. He takes its help to sit, move, do his chores and then comes back with its aid. In cases where one is not even able to see his own hands due to the darkness, the speech or the voice helps him to reach the destination where he wants to go²’.

Janak accepted this argument, saying, ‘Yes sage, it is indeed so’ (5).

[Note—¹The *Vak* or the faculty of speech has the Fire God as its patron deity—refer Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse no.12. The Fire God took up his residence inside the mouth of the man at the time of creation, and the faculty of speech is a manifestation of this God. Hence, in essence, in the absence of the physical light of the fire, its subtler manifestation in the form of the faculty of speech, or the spoken words, serves the purpose of guiding a person in darkness.

Similarly, the Pran, the vital wind called breath which sustains life in the body, also finds its glory by being established in the Vak—refer Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse no. 27. Thus, even in the absence of light of the sun and the moon as well as the

apparent light of the fire element, the Vak is able to sustain life in the body by the virtue of its ability to retain the life sustaining vital wind called Pran (breath) in the mouth (buckle cavity and the throat, because it is here that sound is generated by a man, which sound is called his speech). The proof of it lies in the fact that a soundly sleeping man can produce a guttural sound known as ‘snoring’. Had there been no life in him, he would not have produced this sound. So, a man who snores can be located even in the dark where there is no light!

²In pitch dark condition, a person can find his way out with the help of someone guiding him by giving him verbal instructions. Or, the trapped person can call out for help. So the faculty of speech represented by Vak symbolically shows the *light* to him in the absence of physical light to show him his way.

There is another connotation of this verse. A man can learn about this world when he ‘hears’ about it; when someone speaks to describe it. So, inspite of not actually seeing it, he can become as knowledgeable about it as a person who has actually seen and witnessed it.]

6. Janak continued with his query, ‘At the time when there is no light of the sun, the moon, the fire and the speech, say then what provides ‘light’ to the Purush (man)?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘At that time, it is the Atma (pure consciousness) which gives him the ‘light’¹. He sits, moves, does his work and comes back under the glow of the light emanating from the Atma’.

Janak replied, ‘Yes, indeed it is so’ (6).

[Note--¹This relates to the fourth state of consciousness called Turiya when the state of blissfulness is obtained. This is when all the coverings shrouding the gem-like *Atma*, which is aglow with its own *light* like a glow worm, comes to the fore. This is the state of ‘Samadhi’ which is a trance-like super conscious existence. It is a state of enlightenment and realization. The word ‘enlightenment’ has the word ‘light’ incorporated in it, that is why enlightenment is a light which shows the way to a realised person the truthful path to Brahm, a path which is the best amidst all the available paths leading to the ultimate truth. To follow this path, no light of the sun, the moon, the fire or the speech is needed. This path is lighted by the light emanating from the self-illuminated, pure conscious entity known as the Atma present inside the very bosom of the man.

A true state of Samadhi is when the man goes about his normal worldly affairs but remains in a perpetual state of blissfulness and detachment from this material world of senses. He remains oblivious of everything, even of his own body. This verse implies that a person can acquire tremendous light by way of enlightenment if he able to ‘light’ the torch of self-realisation which switches on the splendorous light of his Atma. He will need no other artificial source of light then.]

7. Janak asked, ‘Who, or what, is this Atma?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘That enigmatic, intangible, esoteric and magnificent conscious entity that pervades uniformly and universally in the various Prans (which are the different signs of life; literally the vital winds that sustain life in a living being), that which lives in the causal body surrounded by the various Vrittis (natural tendencies and temperaments) that are inherent to the mental setup of the creature and decide its behaviours and thought processes, that which is a personification of the astoundingly pure consciousness that is sagacious, wise, erudite and enlightened, and that which is self-illuminated and luminous like a glow warm—this supreme, transcendental, inexplicable, divine, glorious and majestic entity is called the ‘Purush’¹.

That Atma is universal and infinite. It uniformly pervades throughout the creation, in this world of mortal beings, the microcosm, as well as that world consisting of the immortal beings, the macrocosm.

The Atma is the one which appears to think through the mind and intellect apparatus (called the subtle body of the creature) and act through the various sense organs (called the gross body of the creature)².

This Atma is the one which transcends and goes beyond the physical constraints of the gross body and its organs to do anything when it is dreaming, and it even easily lets go of the body altogether at the time of death and becomes freed from its imaginary limitations and shackling effects³ (7).

[Note—¹The word *Purush* has already been defined in Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse no. 18 as the one who dwells somewhere. In this case this *Purush* is the supreme transcendental Brahman, or the cosmic consciousness that has revealed in the individual body of the man (or any living being or living creature for that matter) and taken up residence in his bosom as the Atma. This Atma is the soul and essence of the existence of the man, it is the spirit of the living being inside his own self, and it is the truthful identity of that living creature. The Atma is therefore the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Atma or the cosmic Soul. The gross body of the individual creature is the micro level image of the gross body of Brahman which is known as *Viraat* at the macro level of creation, and therefore the soul of that *Viraat* is the Brahman whose counterpart is the Atma of the individual creature.

But since only a living man, and not a dead man, is addressed by the word 'Purush' meaning a 'man', it follows that the *Viraat Purush* is so called because it is a cosmic living entity embodying supreme conscious soul of the cosmos—i.e. Brahman. This cosmic 'Man (Purush)' is invisible and diffused throughout the length and breadth of the creation. When the visible creation came into being, the living creature became the exact replica of this cosmic entity, and therefore was also called *Purush*, implying that it is no less holy and divine and powerful than its cosmic parent, the *Viraat*.

Now, this pure conscious Atma lives inside the causal body which has different *Vrittis* and *Vasanas* (the various natural tendencies and temperaments as well as worldly passions, desires, aspirations, volitions etc.) which form the integral thread of the fabric that helps to design the contour of the mind.

²The *Atma* ensconced in the causal body has to rely upon the mind-intellect complex of the subtle body and the sense organs of the gross body to interact with the external world where it lives. The mind is influenced by the accumulated *Vrittis* and *Vasanas*, while the gross organs of the body depend upon the mind as well as the *Prans* (vital winds) that drive them. So it is obvious that though the Atma appears to be thinking and doing anything, actually it is not. Further, this Atma is the truthful identity of the creature as compared to its mind and body. This fascinating realisation is awakening and enlightenment in brief, and when this does happen the creature is deemed to be liberated from the fetters of ignorance and find deliverance from it, thereby finding salvation and emancipation for his soul.

³During the *dreaming* state of consciousness, as has been explained in note to verse no. 3 above, the Atma can achieve stupendous feats that it just cannot achieve because of the physical limitation of the gross body when it is awake. For example, a man can fly in his dreams and go to visit far off places which are just not possible and practical for him while awake—refer verse no. 9-11, 13-14, 16 of this Brahmin. At the time of *death*, the physical body is discarded and the Atma flies off like a de-aged bird—refer verse no. 12, 36-38 of this Brahmin.

Thus we observe that Atma is an astoundingly mighty, majestically powerful, stupendously glorious and most profound and magnificent entity that just defies definition and classification.]

8. When the Atma—known by its synonym ‘Purush’ because a ‘man’ has his true identity as this Atma and not the physical gross body in which he lives—takes a new birth, it acquires a gross body, and then it erroneously thinks that the body is its true identity. Under this illusion of a false ‘self’, it gets bogged down with all types of sins and evils associated with the body. Hence, the Atma also acquires a ‘sinful character’ for itself because of this erroneous perception (that the body is its self)¹.

But when a person dies, the Atma leaves this sinful, unclean and gross body behind, i.e. it leaves behind all the sins when it dies and then it reverse back to its true original pure form² (8).

[Note--¹The body is a bundle of grossness; it is sinful; it is unclean. The Atma on the other hand is most sublime and subtle, pure and pristine, auspicious and holy. All the deeds are done by the body and not the Atma. So when the latter thinks that the body is its identity and self because it is a resident in it, and also because of various delusions and ignorance, which are the hallmarks of this illusionary mortal world, casting a veil over the Atma, the latter gets involved in the deeds done by the body. On the contrary, when wisdom illuminates the Atma and it realises its prime nature and exalted origin, it dissociates itself from the body, and therefore from the deeds done by it.

²When the person dies, the Atma leaves the body and makes its exit from it much like a bird escaping from its cage and flying off into the sky, or like a snake leaving behind its dead cuticle.]

9. The Purush (i.e. the Atma, the pure consciousness, the true identity of a person) has two places to live—one is this visible world (represented by the waking state) and the other is the next invisible world (represented by the deep sleep state of consciousness). In between the two, there is a third world of dreams. When he remains in the middle level of existence (i.e. in his dreams), he can visualise both the visible gross world as well as the invisible subtle world¹.

While living in the ‘other invisible world’, called Parlok, he sees both the effects of sins that give him suffering, torment and misery, as well as the effects of good deeds that give him bliss and happiness².

When a man sleeps, he sees dreams because of his emotive responses to his fulfilled or unfulfilled desire in relation to this world, coupled with his experience of his past life. Dreams rely heavily on his subconscious memory during sleep. The gross body is inactive, but when he dreams it appears that the man’s body is active. This ‘activation’ is done by the conscious Atma of the individual, and the Atma acts out its wishes in its dreams. The various Vasanas (inherent passion, desires and intents) as well as Vrittis (temperaments, inclinations and habits) of the Atma are played out in the dream (9).

[Note--¹During dreams, a man sees the world that he knows of, the surroundings that he is familiar with, or about those imaginary worlds that his mind can visualise while he was awake. These images are played back during his dream. In fact, dreams rely on memory. This is what is being said here. Further, a dreaming man can even dream of things which are most difficult for him to even imagine while he was awake. For example, many people dream of flying above the ground, of meeting people who have long been dead, or of falling from a high building and still surviving. In all these cases, it can be said that the subtle Purush, the Atma, is seeing things which are beyond the purview of the gross body.

²That is, when a man dies and the Atma reaches the other world, it suffers from the consequences of the bad and evil deeds done by the man during his lifetime. In the same manner, it enjoys the good results of the auspicious deeds done by him during his lifetime. It is during the deep sleep state of consciousness that a person is

in complete bliss; he is oblivious of all the turmoil surrounding him in this world — either in the world of his dreams or in the actual world of wakefulness.]

10. In that dreaming state of existence, there is no physical chariot, no horses, and no path, but the person creates all of them in a virtual world of his dreams. Similarly, there is no actual happiness and joy, no actual enjoyment and comfort, but the man creates them also while he is dreaming. There are neither physical ponds, rivers and lakes in the world of dreams, but they are also created by him. In fact, that person (i.e. his conscious Atma) is the one who ‘creates’ these fakes, and then believes that these fakes actually exist (10).

11. There is a Shloka (a stanza or verse) in the scripture in this connection which says— ‘During the dreaming state of existence, the body becomes inactive, but the Atma (pure conscious soul; pure consciousness) does not sleep. In fact, it activates the entire spectrum of the sub-conscious, and consequently all the things which were lying dormant, latent and buried while a man was awake but were stored in his sub-conscious part of the brain, take sprout and make their appearance felt. Such a state of existence of the man is called ‘Hiranyamaye’¹.

The pure, uncorrupt individual Hiranyamaye revives (comes) back to the waking state of the existence (called the Vishwa) from where it had gone to the dreaming state of existence (called Swapna). This Hiranyamaye is the self-illuminated and radiant Atma glowing with divine consciousness and sublimity; it is radiant and splendidous like gold (11).

[Note :- ¹The term *Hiranyamaye* refers to the macrocosmic subtle body of creation which is radiant and splendidous with divine glow which effuses from the cosmic egg formed as a result of the wish of Brahm to initiate creation. It is so-called because of its simmering yellowish hue resembling hot molten gold. Here the term simply means an entity that is illuminated and radiant like gold, or like a rising sun or a setting sun, which obviously implies the Atma.]

12. That individual Hiranyamaye Purush (i.e. the Atma which is radiant like gold and self illuminated) representing the true identity of the living being/man/creature protects the body with the help of the vital winds called Pran and the nourishment extracted from the food eaten by the individual. That Atma (which is the truthful identity of the creature and is pure consciousness) is like Amrit (the ambrosia of eternity and bliss), and hence it is both imperishable as well as pure. When the time comes and the physical body perishes (dies), this Amrit-like Atma leaves it and moves out of it. At that time, it goes to the place where the desires and passion that were hidden in its bosom take him; it goes to the place for which it has a longing. [This explains the concept of (a) rebirth, and (b) attaining a life that is in consonant with a person’s past life.] (12)

[Note--If a dying man is enlightened, sagacious and wise, he would have realised the futility of worldly pursuits and the pain, sufferings and miseries this world gives to the creature. So his Atma (i.e. his pure self; his true identity; his pure consciousness which is wise, enlightened and erudite) will never ever long for it, and therefore the person would not take any rebirth in this world. But such enlightenment necessitates the sprouting of sincere desire for emancipation and salvation, and the awareness of the truth. Hence, he will desire eternal Mukti (emancipation and salvation; final liberation and deliverance) instead of worldly material comforts and other forms of self gratification which are mortal and temporary. This Mukti means he will reach the heaven to be near his Lord God if he is a devotee of a certain deity, and if he is a worshipper of the supreme Brahm, he would yearn for the merger of his own soul

with that Brahm so that they become one and there is no question of his taking rebirth in this mortal world again. This is a state called ‘Kaivalya Mukti’ or ‘the emancipation and salvation which are the only one of their kind’.]

13. That individual Atma, which is blessed with all the auspicious and divine attributes and qualities which make it as exalted and divine as a God, becomes one like an ordinary being during the dreaming state. In this state it has high and low emotions, it assumes many forms, and it creates numerous fake worlds having various shapes and forms which suits its latent and inherent desires. Sometimes it would frolic around with women and exult in their company, at other times it would enjoy the company of friends, and still at other times it would see scary and terrifying scenes that would scare the wits out of it (13).

14. All people see the transient habitat, the temporary dwelling (i.e. the gross body) of that divine and exalted Purush (because the supreme Atma resident in the body of a creature is not visible to anyone). The people cannot see the Atma, which is the person’s true identity, and instead see the gross body in which the Atma lives and erroneously begin to identify the supreme and divine Purush (Brahm) with that physical and gross body in which the Atma (consciousness) lives. So no one sees the person’s true form; no one actually sees the truthful identity of the person. Instead, pseudo individual is seen in the form of the physical gross body.

According to experts in this field, a sleeping man should not be woken up suddenly, because this may cause a paralysis of sensations in one or the other sense organs of the body where appropriate impulses might not reach so suddenly. In such a case, treatment becomes difficult.

Some wise and learned people say that the dreaming state is a subtler form of the waking state of the mind because what one sees or experiences during the latter stage forms his memory databank from which the sleeping man’s sub-conscious gets a feedback to construct the world of dreams. [That is why we say ‘I couldn’t imagine this thing even in my dreams’ because I have not seen it before, or I have no previous experiences of it, or I have never witnessed it before.] Therefore, the ‘person’ is the same in both the state—waking as well as dreaming. As a rational corollary therefore, it is the Atma that actually ‘sees’ this world and interacts with it even as it ‘sees’ a dream and acts in it.

In other words, it is the same self-illuminated and glorious Atma that sees the external world during its waking state as well as during its dreaming state of existence. [That is why a wise man says ‘this world is like a dream’.]

Janak was overwhelmed. He said in exultation, ‘Oh sage! I am very grateful to you, and I reward you with one thousand gold coins. Oh Lord, now preach me about Moksha (final liberation and deliverance of the soul; emancipation and salvation of the soul)’ (14).

15. Yagyavalkya said, ‘During the deep sleep state of consciousness, called Sushupta, the creature’s Atma witnesses both the bad (called ‘Paap’) as well as the good (called ‘Punya’)¹, but it remains aloof from both because in this state of existence, the Atma has no physical body as such, neither the gross body (as in the waking state), nor the subtle body (as in the dreaming state). The body which the Atma has in this stage is the causal body—the body which is the ‘causative factor’ for the other two stages to have their existence. It is a very temporary phase, and the creature (i.e. its Atma)

reverts back to the earlier stage, the second stage called the dream stage of the consciousness.

As observed above, during the deep sleep state of consciousness, the creature is all alone and it has nothing to do with the external world, either the physical world or the imaginary world. It remains alone and dispassionate; it is not involved in anything done by either the gross body or the subtle body².

Janak was pleased and he said, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! It is indeed so. I give you one thousand gold coins. Preach me more about Moksha'³ (15).

[Note—¹Refer also to verse nos. 9-11, 20-30 of this Brahmin above as well as to Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 19.

²That is why this state is called 'blissful' because there are no emotive feelings creating any kind of disturbance in the natural blissfulness of the Atma. In this state there is neither a feeling of joy nor that of sorrows.

³The last observation—'Please preach me more about Moksha'—shows that Janak did not get a comprehensive answer that he was expecting from sage Yagyavalkya when he had asked this question in verse no. 14.]

16. Yagyavalkya continued with his preaching. He said, 'When a man dreams, he does many things, sees and witnesses both pleasant and unpleasant sights. But finally he comes back to the state (i.e. the waking state) from where he had migrated into the world of dreams'¹.

When he finally wakes up, he finds he has nothing to do with the world of dreams; that world has been left behind by him; it was an imaginary world which has no relevance in his practical life in this world².

The reason is that the person who sees and witnesses the dream and takes part in it is actually not doing so. He in fact remains a mute spectator who is not involved in what he is witnessing and has no part to play in anything. He remains aloof and detached. What he sees in his dream is all an imaginary scene created by the hallucinating mind. All that he sees in a dream is nothing but an illusion, a 'dream', something which is not real and has no bearing on actual problems of life. The person (the Purush; the Atma; the man's true identity, his pure consciousness) remains uninvolved in all this'.

Janak said gratefully, 'Oh Yagyavalkya! It is indeed as you say. I donate one thousand gold coins to you but pray, tell me more about Moksha'. (16).

[Note--¹That is, the world of dreams do not last long, and ultimately, after venturing out temporarily to roam about in this territory, the person wakes up to reality in this world, i.e. he metaphorically comes back home from his venturing missions or his reconnaissance exercise.

²That is, whether he has suffered or whether he has enjoyed himself in his dreams, neither of them has any bearing on his practical humdrum life in this mundane world. He is back to square one from where he had started. Even if he had dreamt of being a king, eating a sumptuous dinner, when he wakes up to the reality, he comes face to face with the harsh realities of his life in this world where he has to toil to arrange for even one square meal a day.]

17. The person (or his Atma which is his truthful identity and which is pure consciousness) roams freely during the waking state of consciousness, sees and witnesses so many good and bad sights, enjoys and suffers pleasant and unpleasant scenes, and finally goes back to dream about them when he sleeps (17).

18. Even as some large fish moves hither and thither between the two banks of river, a person also oscillates between these two states of existence—the waking state and the dreaming state (18).

[Note—In short, these verses emphasise that the Atma, while it lives in this body, keeps itself busy in two states of existence—one is the waking state when it does so many deeds through the medium of the gross body and its organs and then thinks that it has done this and that, and second is the dreaming state when also it does equal number of things, in fact it may do even greater things because the limitations imposed by the gross body are not there, and once again thinks that it has done this and that. It continues to go back and forth between these two states like a ball which bounces again and again till it comes to a final rest which in the case of the Atma would be Mukti which Janak wants to know about.]

19. Even as a falcon or a kite flies endlessly in all the directions in the sky, and upon getting tired it retracts its wings and heads for its nest for rest, a person also gets tired of this endless journey between the waking state and dreaming states of existence (i.e. the rhythmic and apparently never ending cycle of waking and sleeping), and to derive rest he heads for the deep sleep state of consciousness when he is not disturbed by any kind of emotions and feelings. [That is why it is called the blissful state of existence.]

In this state, he neither has a desire to enjoy anything, nor does he see a dream¹ (19).

[Note--¹That is why this short spell of deep sleep is far more refreshing than a night of sleep where a man dreams constantly. Such a man wakes up restless and un-refreshed. Dreams leave a man mentally tired because the subtle body consisting of the mind does not find any rest during the dreaming state of existence of the consciousness. This state of dream gives the same restless to the mind as the waking state. So, as far as the mind is concerned, the only plane where it can find rest is the deep sleep state of existence.]

20. The Naadis (the tubular ducts present inside the body; the nerves and the veins) called Hita (refer verse no. 3 of Brahmin 2 of this Canto) are so fine that their diameter is about one thousand times smaller than the width of a hair follicle. These Naadis have different shades of colours— white, yellow, blue, green and red. [See also Canto 4, Brahmin 4, verse no. 9.]

When a man sees such scary scenes as someone hitting and subduing him, or he was being chased by an elephant, or as if he was falling in a grave and horrifying pit during the dreaming state of consciousness, he takes them to be for real out of his ignorance about the reality. This causes an immense degree of anguish, agitation and consternation to him; he feels tormented, dismayed, miserable and terrified.

Similarly, if he thinks during sleep that he is a God, a king or a Lord of everything, he experiences an immense amount of joy and happiness. These erroneous thoughts of a dream give him temporary bliss and a false sense of happiness and contentedness which are as transient as the dream itself (20).

[Note--The different colours of the Naadis are due to the different vital fluids flowing through them—e.g. mucous is white, bile is yellow, blood is red, the various herbs and vegetables eaten by a creature produce a green tinge in their blood and their skin because of the relevant pigmentation, while blue stands for the air or sky element. It is often seen that person suffering from loose stools have green motions, while the veins and capillaries sometimes become bluish due to the lack of blood corpuscles in them. Then there are certain species of animals which have a bluish tinge of their blood.]

These colours indicate certain traits and emotive feelings of a man—e.g. anger is associated with red colour, white symbolises peaceful nature, green and yellow indicate lack of vitality as is the case when a man is stricken with jaundice and diarrhea.]

21. During the deep sleep state of consciousness, the primary form of the person is one which has no passions, yearnings, aspirations or desires, one which is without any kind of sins and falsehoods, and one which is without any kind of fear and consternation. Just like a person who is in a tight embrace of a woman he loves forgets about everything else, whether external or internal, whether relevant or irrelevant, a person who embraces or communes with the enlightened, self-illuminated and pure conscious Atma also remains oblivious of everything else pertaining to the external gross world of the senses as well as the subtle world of his mind. In other words, he becomes immune to the disturbances created by the sensory perceptions of the waking state as well as the emotive responses of the world of dreams.

Verily, this state of existence of that man is free of all desires and wishes because he is completely contented and blissful (called 'Aptakaam'). He is also indistinguishable from his Atma which is pure conscious self (called 'Atmakaam'). Since that form of the man's existence has no desires in it, it is also without passions, yearnings and expectations of any kind (called 'Akaam'). And being without any wants and desires, he is completely at peace with himself; he has no sorrows, worries, sufferings and anguish to torment him (called 'Shokantara'). That is, he exists in a complete blissful state (21).

[Note--See also Canto 4, Brahmin 4, verse no. 6 in this context.]

22. During the deep sleep state of consciousness when all interactive relations pertaining to the world become meaningless and cease to exist—such as a father has no relevance to his son, the mother also ceases to have any importance for the son (because both of them are the cause of birth and creating the gross physical body, but in this state of existence the Atma becomes independent and detached from the body, and consequentially it has no need for a parent, either for a father or a mother).

The Lokas (the different types of worlds) lose their importance (because a deeply sleeping a man is unconcerned with the outside world and its happenings). Similarly, the Atma does not need the help of Gods and so they too lose their relevance (because the Gods are propitiated by men to help them overcome numerous worldly problems, and during this state the Atma has no such need).

The need for the Vedas (which are repositories of knowledge) also does not arise (because the Atma is self enlightened and self illuminated, requiring no external means to enlighten it about anything or illuminate its path towards spiritual attainment, as it has already reached that blissful state which the Vedas teach).

In this state of existence, a thief becomes a non-thief (because stealing is a physical action pertaining to this artificial and materialistic world; when the world itself ceases to have any relevance, when the Atma is fully contented, there is no need to steal anything and there is no place from where anything can be stolen. The very cause and the need for 'stealing' become redundant).

Even a killer of an unborn child (e.g. an abortionist) is absolved of this charge of killing an unborn child (because when asleep, he forgets that he has killed an embryo that has life in it; a sleeping man does not kill anyone).

A Chandal (i.e. a low outcaste man) becomes a non-Chandal (because such segregations are meant for the physical body and the deeds done by that body; they have no relevance for the Atma which is always pure and immaculate. It must be

remembered that the same Atma lives in a Chandal as well as a Brahmin. So the segregation is meant for that plane of existence where the physical body matters, but not that state of existence where the physical body becomes irrelevant).

A Paulkas (पौल्कस—i.e. a child born due to the union of a low caste man and an upper caste woman belonging to the Kshatriya class) becomes a non-Paulkas (because of the same reason as cited for the Chandal).

A Sanyasi (i.e. a renunciate mendicant or hermit) becomes a non-Sanyasi (because the very purpose of taking the vows of Sanyas—to renounce the false world and its deluding attachments and attractions, to prepare for the ultimate bliss which comes with such detachment, and endeavouring to realise the ‘true self’, have already been symbolically achieved by the person during his deep sleep state of consciousness when he has completely withdrawn himself from the external gross world of the waking state as well as the emotive world of the dreaming state).

For the same reason, a person engaged in doing Tapa (austerity, penance and observance of strict religious vows) also does not do it at that time because while asleep it is impossible for him to keep those rigorous vows; the Tapa is done by the body, and when the person has no relevance for the body during his deep sleep state of existence, the question of doing Tapa does not arise.

In short, at that time, a deep-sleeping man remains completely detached from and dispassionate towards all things mundane and deluding, all those things which pertain to this artificial world of material sense objects, whether they are righteous and good (called Punya) or unrighteous and bad (called sinful or Paap). He is deemed to have gone beyond all the agitations and sorrows of the heart, and consequentially is deemed to have obtained peace and bliss (22).

23. In that deep sleep state of consciousness a person does not ‘actually’ see even though he latently possesses the faculty of sight and the power to see. So although he does not see the physical happenings of the gross world, he nevertheless inherently possesses ‘deep insight’ or the faculty of insight that transcends the physical and sensual world of the waking state as well as the emotive world of dreams. This sight is eternal and infinite; it never ceases to see even as the latent virtues of fire to give light and heat remain eternal and are revived back at the slightest hint.

In that state of existence, there is no one else but that individual ‘self’. Therefore, there is no cause for that person to see anyone other than himself (because all external worlds cease to exist for a man in the deep sleep state of consciousness). There is no one other than the Atma who can be seen (because it has already been said that the Atma lives alone and secluded in this exalted state of existence—refer verse no. 15-16). (23).

24. In that deep sleep state of consciousness, a person does not smell although he latently possesses the power to smell. This inherent power to smell is eternal but latent in a sleeping man. It never extinguishes even as his Atma never dies. But what could he smell in that state, because for all practical purposes, there is nothing but his own true self that exists at that time. The external world from where the perception of smell originates, and the mind that perceives that smell, cease to have any relevance for the consciousness that is in the deep sleep state of existence (24).

25. In a similar way, though such a person inherently possesses the power to imbibe various juices (i.e. though the ability to drink and taste is inherently present in the

body of a deeply sleeping man because this faculty forms an integral part of any living organism's life), he does not drink in that state of consciousness. This power of being able to drink and taste does not go anywhere; it is latently present in a dormant state in a man who is sleeping deeply or soundly. This ability to drink and taste is always present in him, because this ability or virtue to drink is one of the various attributes of the eternal Atma. But during the deep sleep state of consciousness, what would the Atma drink and what would it taste, being itself a fountain of the essence of all tasty and succulent drinks that exist in the world? That is, since the Atma is a fountain of eternal bliss and happiness, which is regarded as the essence of all elixirs, there is no need for it to drink anything else.

Further, since the Atma is eternal and imperishable, inherently healthy and blissful, it also does not require any drink to derive any nourishment for its own sustenance. There is nothing besides that fountain of bliss (i.e. the Atma) from which the person can drink anything; there is no need for such a drink. How can one ever drink one's own self? (25)

26. In that state of deep sleep state of consciousness, a person possesses the faculty of speech and the power to speak, but he does not speak. This faculty and power is inherent to a person; he cannot be divested from his power and ability to speak. Speech is eternally present in him just like his Atma, because the ability to speak is one of the many divine attributes of the Atma. But what can he speak about, for there is nothing besides the Atma about which anything truthful can be spoken, and the Atma is so enlightened and truthful that there is nothing to be said about it. So what can a person speak about during the deep sleep state of consciousness? Since the external worlds of the waking state of existence as well as the imaginative world of dreams do not exist for a man in a deep sleep state of existence, there is no question of a man having to speak about anything pertaining to these two worlds. Since the Atma is self enlightened and wise, it need not be told anything (27).

27. In that state of deep sleep state of consciousness, a person does not hear anything though he is inherently possessed of the powers to hear; the faculty of hearing is inherently present in him, but it is in a dormant state during this state of existence. Since that person's true identity is the Atma, and this Atma is eternal, the person never loses the power to hear (because the ability to hear is one of the many divine attributes of the Atma) though this faculty of hearing and ability to hear appears to be dormant and hidden during the deep sleep state of consciousness. Since there is nothing besides the pure conscious Atma during this state of existence, and since the external world of the waking state of existence as well as the imaginative world of dreams do not exist for a man in a deep sleep state of existence, there is no question of a man having to hear about anything pertaining to these two worlds. Since the Atma is self enlightened and wise, it need not hear anything to learn about anything which is not already known to it (27).

28. In that state of deep sleep state of consciousness, a person does not think of anything though he has the inherent powers to think, ponder and contemplate. Since his true self, the Atma, is eternal and imperishable, this faculty of thinking which is inherent and one of the major divine attributes of the conscious, wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened Atma, this faculty of thinking is also eternal and imperishable. Since in the deep sleep state of existence, the subtle mind of the man

ceases to exist and at the same time the external world also ceases to exist, there is no mind that can think and there is no external world to think about.

Again, since the only entity that exists in this state of deep sleep is the Atma which is the 'true self and pure consciousness' of the man, there is nothing else that he can think of, and consequentially the relevance of the process of thinking also becomes redundant. There is nothing upon which he can ponder, think and contemplate except his own self, the enlightened and eternal Atma (28).

29. In that state of deep sleep state of consciousness, a person possesses the power to feel and touch, but he does not do so. That does not mean that the man does not have that empowerment. In fact, this ability to feel and touch is inherent in him, it is an integral part of the various divine abilities and attributes that the man possesses; it is eternal like his own true self, the Atma, because the ability to feel and touch is one of the many divine attributes of the Atma. But since during this state of deep sleep there is nothing else besides his true self (i.e. the Atma), because the gross external physical world of the waking state of existence as well as the imaginative world of dreams do not exist, there is no question of having to feel and touch anything. The notion of feeling and touching comes with those things which are gross and physical but not with those thing which do not have any grossness and physical forms. Since the Atma is a subtle, formless and ethereal entity, it cannot be felt and touched. Further, since the only entity that exists in this state of deep sleep is the ethereal and subtle and sublime Atma, who or what can be touched and felt? (29)

30. In that state of deep sleep state of consciousness, a person has the innate ability to learn and to know. In spite of that, he does not have to learn or know anything. But that does not mean that he does not have the inherent ability to learn and know. This quality of being able to learn and acquire knowledge is an integral quality of a man, and it is an eternal part of his life even as his Atma, which itself is learned and all-knowing, is eternal and an integral and inseparable part of his life. This is because the ability to learn anything and acquire knowledge is one of the attributes of the many attributes that the Atma possesses. Since the Atma is eternal, these attributes are also eternal.

But the fact remains that during the deep sleep state of consciousness, the external physical world of the waking state of existence as well as imaginative world of dreams do not have any relevance for the man, and therefore the Atma, which is already all-knowing and self-enlightened, wise and erudite, need not learn and know anything.

Further, since during the deep sleep state of existence, the only entity that has any relevance is the pure conscious Atma, what can a man learn about, what can he know about? Of course nothing! (30).

[Note--Verse nos. 22-30 describe the state of existence called *Sushupta* or the deep sleep state of consciousness. Now, verse nos. 31 onwards describe the other two states of existence of the pure consciousness—the dream and the wakeful.]

31. In a state of existence (such as the dreaming state and waking state) when out of ignorance there is a sense of duality, when the person sees something other than himself¹, when the occasion occurs for him to interact with another person or any second entity, the above conditions (as described in verse nos. 22-30) do not apply.

Then, one person is able to see another person; one person can smell something having a different origin than his own Atma; a person can taste something

that has an existence extraneous to his own Atma which is an eternal fount of all elixirs; one person can talk with another, touch and feel another, learn and know about another (31).

[Note--¹The enlightened view is that the only truthful entity that is there in this existence and which forms the basis and essence of all that 'really' exists as opposed to what 'appears' to exist is the eternally truthful ethereal Atma. If one sees anything other than it, then it is surely due to ignorance of the reality and truth much like one seeing and believing that water exists in the simmering hot desert when he sees the mirage. This basic ignorance leads to the conception of duality and its chain of consequences.

Hence, when the man is not in an enlightened state of existence when he is in direct contact of the Atma just like a man is in close embrace of a woman as described in verse no. 21 above, he begins to see so many other things much like this man who sees so many other women when he has left the woman he loves.

So, both in the case of the dreaming state of existence as well as the wakeful state of existence, a person has a chance to interact with some 'other' person or thing. He has established some kind of working relationship with those entities which are not his own self, whether they are 'virtually real' as in the waking state of consciousness, or are 'imaginary' in the dreaming state. This notion of having two different states—one in which the only entity that exists is the 'self' and the other in which two separate entities exist, one being the 'self' and the other being 'the other person or thing'—is called the *state of duality*.]

32. Even as one 'sees' his own single undistorted image in a clean and undisturbed body of water, there is only one single, immutable and undistorted image of the 'truthful self' during the deep sleep state of consciousness that is 'seen' or observed or experienced or witnessed by a wise, sagacious, erudite and enlightened man. This is indeed called 'Brahm Loka', or the abode of the supreme transcendental conscious Truth known as Brahm¹.

The sage continued with his preaching—"This is the ultimate goal of all the creatures; this is their supreme asset; this is the supreme stature which a creature endeavours to attain because it gives him eternal bliss, peace, tranquility and happiness. It is this elixir of bliss and happiness, tranquility and serenity, peacefulness and calmness that help the creature to sustain its self. Otherwise, constant agitation will make it virtually mad!² (32).

[Note—¹This refers to the Atma which is universally known as the 'image' of Brahm as reflected from the subtle and sublime heart of the man. It is in the heart that this Brahm is deemed to live, as is evident from the fact that the sentiments and emotions of happiness, joy, blissfulness, ecstasy, exhilaration and exultation as well as satisfaction, contentedness and fulfillment have their seat in the heart. Brahm only has these attributes, and therefore the heart is the symbolic abode of Brahm called *Brahm Loka*.

Again, a vast body of water, e.g. the ocean, is basically a reservoir of water which is one, immutable, indivisible and uniform entity known by different names because of the shape that it takes—such as an ocean, spring, lake, river, stream, pond, well, puddle, swamp, slush etc. A sample of water molecule taken from any of these water bodies would be the same on chemical analysis.

The *seer*, or that conscious factor known as the Atma found during the deep sleep state of existence is also one and immutable; it is non dual, uniform and universal. It is this Atma which sees or experiences or witnesses 'itself' during the deep sleep state of existence as well as sees other things during the other two states of waking and dreaming due to the fact that it gets influenced by the veil of ignorance that surround it during these two states.

The state in which this 'non duality' exists (i.e. the deep sleep state of consciousness) is called the 'Brahm Loka' (i.e. the abode of the supreme, transcendental, immutable, infinite, uniform, universal and eternal Brahm). In other words, the state of existence known as the 'deep sleep state of consciousness' is a virtual abode of Brahm; it is a replica of Brahm Loka that a person can experience and witness while still living in this body and in this world.

The Atma, which is pure consciousness and a microcosmic counterpart of the supreme and transcendental Brahm, is the entity which lives in the bosom of the man and is his true identity. It is the Atma that actually 'sees' anything for the body which is erroneously treated as the identity of the man, which is basically inert and inane, and which does not have its own ability and life to see anything independently. Had it not been for the Atma, the man would not have been able to see anything.

The word *seer* also refers to someone who is wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened; someone who is empowered with deep and penetrating insight that enables him to see beyond what is apparent, to see things which require deep thought and contemplation. Since the Atma possess these qualities, it is called the 'seer'. The place where this Atma lives in the body of the creature is therefore a symbolic 'Brahm Loka'. This is what sage Yagyavalkya preached to Janak.

²It is a established fact that a man cannot survive without adequate sleep. Good quality sleep is one in which he does not dream, because it is very relaxing for not only the body but also for the mind as well. Dreams often leave a nightmarish experience for the man, and he wakes up most agitated and un-refreshed as if he has not slept at all. Yagyavalkya means exactly this. His observations have scientific validity.]

33. The state of existence in which a man has an able body which is healthy and robust (i.e. he is not physically handicapped), possesses all worldly material comfort and pleasures, is regarded with esteem amongst his peers, and is the Lord (king; master; owner) of all that he surveys—that condition gives him an immense sense of achievement, satisfaction, contentedness and happiness which are tantamount to obtaining supreme bliss called 'Paramanand'. [That is, such a man is most fortunate and he wishes nothing more for he has what can be had in this material world.]

The Pittars (i.e. the spirits of dead ancestors) who have attained an exalted abode where revered spirits which are worthy of worship and adoration live, have this happiness and contentedness, or the bliss which is hundred times more than that possessed by a man on this earth.

The Gandharvas (i.e. a form of semi Gods who are superior in the heavenly hierarchy to the Pittars) have it hundred times more than what the Pittars have.

A person obtains the exalted stature of heavenly Gods by the virtue of excellent deeds done by him in this world. Such Gods are known as 'Karma Devtas'. (Refer Canto 4, Brahmin 5, verse no. 6.) Hence, those Gods who are called Karma Devtas and who have done auspicious and noble deeds, derive this Anand (i.e. happiness, joy, bliss, comfort, beatitude and felicity) which is equivalent to hundred times more than that which is possessed by the Gandharvas. [In other words, doing good deeds is a provider of great beatitude and felicity to the soul of a person.]

The 'primary Gods' who are eternal and imperishable, who were created at the time of creation and who do not depend upon attaining the exalted stature of Godhood by the virtue of deeds done by them (such as Indra, Fire God, Water God, Wind God etc.), have this Anand which is hundred times more than that which is possessed by the Gods who have attained the stature of Godhood by the virtue of deeds done by them and are therefore known as the 'Karma Devtas'.

Wise, scholarly, selfless and pious people who are well versed and learned in the Vedas (i.e. those who are enlightened and self realised) also possess this Anand which is equivalent to the one possessed by these 'primary Gods'.

The Anand prevailing in the abode of Prajapati (the guardian of creation; here meaning Brahma, the creator and patriarch of creation) is equivalent to a hundred Anands possessed and enjoyed by the Gods who are eternal and possessed of mystical powers. This Anand of Prajapati is also possessed by those people who perform fire sacrifices (called Yagyas), who are free from all kinds of desires and passions, and who are sinless and faultless.

Anand equivalent to hundred times of that present in the abode of Prajapati is present in the Brahm Loka or the abode of the supreme, transcendental Brahm. [This is also called 'Satya Loka' or the abode where the eternal Truth resides.] This Anand is also possessed by exalted people who are well versed and deeply steeped in the Vedas, do religious sacrifices and observe sacraments, and are pious, learned, holy and free from all kinds of passions and desires'.

Yagyavalkya continued with his discourse—'Oh king! This is known as 'Parmanand', or the beatitude and felicity that are supreme, sublime, divine, eclectic and ethereal in nature. It is also a stature where a person is said to be in Brahm Loka, i.e. and existence which is equivalent to being in the haloed precincts of the supreme Brahm where there is nothing but supreme bliss¹'.

Janak was very pleased. He said, 'Oh sage! I donate one thousand cows or gold coins to you. Please continue with your discourse leading to my emancipation and salvation, known as Moksha'.

Hearing his earnest request, sage Yagyavalkya felt a little afraid, thinking that this wise, self-realised, erudite, enlightened and scholarly king would not relent unless his questions are fully answered, or until he is absolutely satisfied with them. And it does not seem easy to answer him or satisfy him fully (33).

[Note—¹It is to be noted that those who diligently pursue a noble, auspicious and righteous way of life enjoy bliss and happiness that are enjoyable in the most highest of places in the spiritual realm—such as the abode of Brahma, the creator, and the abode of the supreme creator known as Brahm, the transcendental Supreme Being. This verse is meant to inspire people that if they wish to enjoy supreme beatitude and felicity prevailing in the highest of heaven here on this earth itself while living and enjoying the pleasures and comforts of the world at the same time, then the way is to lead a life that is sanctioned by the scriptures and is hallmarked by qualities and grand virtues that come under the all-round purview of nobility, morality, ethics, probity, auspiciousness and righteousness.

This observation that those who are pious, holy, followers of religious tenets, learned in the scriptures, selfless, devoid of all worldly yearnings, passions and desires, having no worldly hopes and expectations, are equivalent to the exalted Gods, to the creator Brahma, and to the supreme Brahm himself, is very significant. This shows that supreme beatitude and felicity is obtainable while a man is alive here on this earth itself; there is no need to search for such beatitude and felicity in the heaven after death if a man can reach that noble and exalted stature as defined and described in the Upanishads while he is still alive. If he is enlightened enough to realise what actually emancipation and salvation imply, he can enjoy their benefits right here on this earth while he is living, and for such an enlightened man, freedom from this world acquires a sublime and ethereal meaning. He can have a body, do the deeds of the world and behave normally inspite of being fully liberated and delivered from the fetters that shackle an ordinary deluded man who is attached to this deluding and artificial world because he is ignorant of the reality. This is called 'Videha Mukti' as well as 'Jivan Mukti' for the wise man.]

34. Yagyavalkya said, 'When a man has completed all his activities in his dream in which he was engaged while asleep, and has virtually watched the good and the bad events that gave him pleasure or sorrow in that dream, he comes back to that original state of existence from where he had ventured out into the dreaming state of existence (i.e. he comes back to the waking state) (34).

35. Just like a bullock yoked to a cart loaded with some kind of weight moves on groaning, panting and huffing under this burden, and is forced to move even against its will by the compulsive pushing, poking, thrashing and prodding by the cart owner, the Atma of the creature residing in its body, called the 'Ling Atma' (i.e. the ethereal soul of the corporeal body) of the creature, also moves along compulsively in this world and remains active in this body, panting, groaning and croaking under the burden of the baggage of the creature's past deeds as well as its present deeds. This 'Ling Atma', i.e. the ethereal and sublime Atma that has acquired a gross body for its self by virtue of the deeds done by it during its past life and their resultant consequences, is under the command of the 'Pragya Atma' (or the enlightened, knowledgeable, self-illuminated and wiser aspect of the supreme and transcendental consciousness known as the 'true self' of the creature, or the creature's real Atma which is a manifestation of the supreme cosmic consciousness called Brahm). The breath that a creature takes makes a subtle hissing or rustling or rasping or groaning sound as it passes in and out of the nostrils, resembling the hard and serious efforts continuously being made by the creaking cart and its yoked bullock to move ahead on their designated path in life in spite of the accompanying great strain [35].

[Note--The Ling Atma is the ethereal form of the Atma residing in the corporeal body of a creature. This is his individual Atma which has assumed a dwelling for its self in the gross body of the creature. The various Vasanas and Vrittis, i.e. the different inherent passions, habits, temperaments and tendencies that determine the nature and characteristic of the creature, as well as the cumulative effects of his past and present deeds, form the subtle body of this Atma.

Since this Ling Atma has a gross body in which it dwells, it is not that aspect of the Atma which is eternal, immaculate, supreme, divine and transcendental because this aspect of the Atma has no form and body. It is the entity known by the name of Brahm who has no body; it is the Pragya Atma. The latter is the supreme authority which is self-enlightened, self-illuminated and self-wise.

There is no confusion between the two—the former Atma, i.e. the Ling Atma, would become the latter Atma, i.e. the Pragya Atma represented by the self-illuminated, omniscient and all-pervading supreme transcendental Brahm if it got rid of its burdens and encumbrances created by its ignorance of the reality and truth that has bogged it down. How? Ignorance of the 'real and truthful' nature of the transcendental cosmic Atma as described in this Upanishad—which is briefly that the Atma is immaculately pure, that it has no duality and no physical body, and whatever the body does has got nothing to do with the Atma which remains indifferent and detached from them—creates a situation whereby the resident Atma erroneously begins to think that the body is its true identity and therefore the deeds done by the body are done by it. With this deception of view, the Atma gets attached to the deeds and wishes to enjoy the fruits of the deeds. As a consequence, it gets tied to the deeds and their results. This sets off a chain reaction and since desires and hopes have no end, and since all wishes cannot be fulfilled in one life span, the Atma wishes to take another birth when this body perishes in due course of time. This is the fundamental cause of the Atma getting trapped in the virtually endless cycle of birth and death. In the new birth (body), the same mistake is repeated by the Atma. And since this world is full of miseries and pains of all sorts, the Atma groans and hisses during its long

journey. The chain snaps only when enlightenment dawns upon the mental horizon of the creature—it is then it detaches its Atma from yoke and sets it free.

However, till enlightenment and wisdom comes, the Ling Atma continues to move between the dreaming and waking states of existence represented by the phase of delusions and ignorance as well as by the phase of consciousness, wisdom, enlightenment and truthful knowledge respectively. See also verse no. 18 in this context. When this Atma reaches the third state of existence called ‘Sushupta’ or the deep sleep state of consciousness, it comes closer to being the ‘Pragya Atma’, because now it is deemed to reside in the causal body, without having anything to do with either the subtle body or the gross body of the creature. It is in close proximity to its original form, the Pragya Atma, without any interference from the veil of the different Vasanas and Vrittis that surround the Ling Atma during its interaction with the subtle as well as the gross bodies. These Vrittis and Vasanas are the result of the past deeds done by the Atma in its previous body as well as in its present body before enlightenment dawns upon it.

The breath is also known as Pran, which is the vital wind force of life, providing the vital, all important spark of life to the body. It is the only vital wind amongst the five that make some kind of subtle noise while coming in (inhalation) and going out (exhalation). This is a metaphor for the effort made by the Ling Atma under the command of the Pragya Atma to continue to toil till the time it reaches the state of self-realisation of its true form and nature—which is being eternally enlightened, immaculate and free from the possession of any kind of bodies and the notion of duality.

Incidentally, the ‘stoppage of breath’ is done during the meditative exercise called Pranayam which helps to clean the body of all its accumulated toxins. This exercise has been described in detail in the Upanishads that deal with Yoga. During Pranayam, breath is controlled, which is a metaphoric way of saying that the Pran is trained to stop its groan and huff under the burden of the body! That is why this meditative exercise is given great importance in Yoga because it symbolically brings the Ling Atma close to the state when it stops wailing and making its tormenting complaint.

The different concepts appearing in these verses have been further explained in separate appendices at the end of this volume.]

36. When the old age is reached, the body becomes weak and fragile. Then a person gradually loses control over his sense organs one by one and finally discards the entire body just like ripe fruits of mango, the wild fig tree or a pepper tree fall off from the tree one by one. That is, the Atma slowly withdraws itself from being too much attached and concerned about the body. The individual organs and functions of the body fall aside (i.e. cease to function) one by one till the Atma finally leaves the body altogether.

Upon death, that person (i.e. his Atma) goes to assume another body and take another birth by following the same path (process) through which he (i.e. the Atma) had assumed the present body and had taken the present birth (36).

[Note--Since the person has not shaken off his burden of Vasanas and Vrittis that are the result of his various desires, yearnings, wishes, hopes, expectations and aspiration etc., and since this body is subject to decay and destruction, the Atma representing the person’s truthful identity, unilaterally abandons it though the person wishes to have a long and almost eternal, interminably long life to enable him to continuously enjoy the comforts and pleasures of this body for a long time. This is one of the reasons why the person who is engrossed in this world feels so terribly distressed when the time comes to die as opposed to an enlightened man who has renounced all his attachments with the world as well as with the gross body and its sense organs.

It is impossible to accomplish everything one desires and aspires for in the span of one single life simply because these desires and aspirations have no end. Naturally therefore, since his desires and wishes have not been fully satisfied, an ordinary man would be impelled and compelled by them to take another birth to satisfy his yet unsatisfied desires and yearnings and to fulfill his unfulfilled aspirations, yearnings, hopes and expectations.

By saying ‘the same path or process’, it is meant that he takes birth in the same class of creatures in which he was born in this life—that is an animal will become an animal and not insect, but may be born as an animal of the higher or lower rung of the evolutionary ladder; similarly a man will become a man though he might take birth in a higher or a lower echelon of the human race. Refer Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 28; Canto 4, Brahmin 4, verse no. 1-4; Canto 5, Brahmin 10; and Canto 6, Brahmin 2, verse no. 2-16 of this Upanishad in this context. Also refer Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition, Canto 5, Section 3—Canto 5, Section 10 published separately in this series of Upanishads.]

37. Even as violent, cruel and arrogant officials and attendants of a king, such as his soldiers, administrative and judicial officers as well as village chieftains prepare to welcome a king and wait for his arrival with eagerness and baited breath after having made all arrangements for his comfortable lodging, boarding, meals and entertainment, when a wise, erudite and sagacious man who is enlightened about the good or bad effects of deeds done by him during his lifetime dies, he (i.e. his Atma which is his true identity) is eagerly awaited by all the primary ‘Bhuts’ (the basic infinite elements of Nature from which his body was moulded—such as earth, water, fire, air/wind and sky) represented by their patron Gods who say—‘There, Brahm is coming; he is coming!’ (37).

[Note—The Atma is like the emperor of the realm consisting of the gross body. This body primarily is not one single unit made from one single element but it consists of so many independent elements that have been integrated into one combined unified ‘state’ called the body. These elements work in harmony and in a coordinated fashion as long as the emperor is at the helm of affairs, but when he wishes to abdicate his throne and take to the life of a mendicant as it were, the state falls apart. But if the emperor has led an auspicious and noble life, then inspite of his renunciation of the crown, the subjects and the units that formed his erstwhile kingdom still give him great respect and revere him with the same honour that they have showing to him when he was wearing the crown. They give him standing ovation and stand by to welcome him in his new life.

This analogy would help to sum up the essential meaning of this verse. The body in which the Atma lives is a construct of the five fundamental elements of Nature such as earth, water, fire, air and sky. Besides them, there are other subtle elements numbering variously as ninety four, twenty six, twenty five, twenty four and eight as described in different Upanishads which together form the composite whole known as the body of the creature. If the creature leads an auspicious and righteous life of nobility and virtuousness, then when he dies, the patron Gods of these elements, i.e. the personified forms of the various forces of Nature, stand by to welcome him because they know that he is worthy of respect and honour as he is wise, sagacious, learned and enlightened. They pay tributes to the soul of such a person and bow before him and show him the path towards his emancipation and salvation. They know that he has renounced all his attractions with material world and its sensual comforts, and therefore his soul cannot be shown this bait and trapped to fall back into being indulgent in the senses. That is, these Gods know that his salvation is pre-determined and therefore they vie with each other to show their respect to him and gain the credit of helping him.

Who is a wise man who gets this exalted stature and warm welcome by the Gods? The answer is a man who knows that his Atma is his 'truthful' identity and that it is eternal, immaculate, enlightened, uncorrupt, holy and divine, while the body in which this Atma lives and which is usually but erroneously regarded as the identity of the person, has the opposite attributes and characters from that which is possessed by the Atma. The various deeds are done by the body under the command of the mind which is in turn is under the influence of the various Vasanas and Vrittis (passions, yearnings, desires and habits as well as temperaments and tendencies) that are inherently present in a creature. The Atma has nothing to do with it. Since the Atma is not involved in anything done by the gross body, there is no question of it having to suffer the consequences of the deeds done by this body; it is the body that suffers. This holistic and enlightened viewpoint frees the Atma or pure consciousness from getting mired into any controversy and being tainted by any blemish pertaining to either the body or the world in which this body lives and interacts. Thus, at the time of death—or at the time of discarding of the gross body—the Atma just leaves it like a snake removing its cuticle or a man shedding off his old cloth and wearing a new one.

This is the Upanishadic view of the final liberation and deliverance of the soul, called Moksha, whereby the soul detaches itself from its gross body and merges with its primary source, the supreme transcendental Brahm, from where it has not to comeback to this mortal world anytime again. The constituent parts of his body also merge with the primary elements of creation from which this body was formed in the first place—such as the earth aspect of the body merges with the earth element, the watery aspect of the body such as its fluid parts merge with the water element, the fire element present in the body which gives it its energy and heat also merge with the primary fire element, the vital winds present inside the body are released upon death to merge with the air element present outside the body when it disintegrate upon death, and finally the space element present inside the body merges with the vast cosmic space when the boundary wall represented by the gross body of the man is removed when he dies.

Such a wise and erudite Atma is called 'Pragna' and the supreme Lord represented by this Atma is called 'Ishwar', the transcendental Brahm. That is why these patron Gods of the various Bhuts say 'Brahm is coming' when they get ready to welcome the self-illuminated, self-realised, wise and enlightened Atma of a person who has died. The comparison with the king is also very appropriate here because the Atma is also like the boss or the Lord or the master of the body which is like the cosmos in microcosm.

On the other hand, if a man had been leading an indulgent life of grossness and crassness, he is reviled by these Gods. When the time comes for such an indulgent emperor, here represented by the Atma or the 'self' of the indulgent man, to leave or abdicate the throne when the body becomes too old (i.e. when it is the time to die), these Gods begin to torture him; they inflict numerous miseries and torments usually undergone by an ailing man before his death. Such a suffering emperor (man) wails and laments woefully; he yearns for his kingdom and to its comforts to which he is so emotionally attached. So the Gods send him back to another body once again to live out his unfulfilled desires and aspirations. The Gods obviously do not want garbage to swamp the heavens as it were!]

38. Just like the soldiers, administrative and judicial officers, the charioteer and the chieftains present themselves before the king and follow him when he leaves the place, this creature (i.e. his Atma) pulls all the vital winds (the different vital forces of life present inside the body) together as it makes its final exit through the medium of the breath coming out at the time of death¹.

[Note--¹That is the reason why after death, once the *Atma* known as the *Pran* or the life of a creature, leaves the body by way of exhalation of breath, the body becomes lifeless. All the functionaries of the kingdom known as the body attend the king known as the *Atma*, and the mundane life of the village the king visits comes to a standstill. When the king decides to leave the village, all his courtiers, the soldiers, the officers, the charioteer and the chieftains, too decide to leave with him. These examples are cited to illustrate the point that the *Atma* is the sovereign entity inside the body. Even as a kingdom is known after the name of the king, e.g. the kingdom where king Janak ruled was known as Janakpur after the name of the king, the body of a creature is also regarded as the identity of the creature just because the sovereign, the *Atma*, resides inside it. Once the *Atma* leaves the body, it is said to be 'lifeless and dead'; it begins to rapidly decay, and it finally disintegrates into its constituent elements.

Till the time the *Atma* had resided in this body, it was able to keep all these primary elements together in the composite form of a body even as a strong emperor is able to hold the vast realm unified and regulated. The *Atma* is even able to infuse/inject life into it, making it move and perform so many difficult tasks. Although it is true that the body is the one that performs all the tasks in this world, the *Atma* is accused of doing them because it is the emperor of the whole setup even as the king is held responsible for anything that happens in his kingdom. Once the *Atma* leaves the body, the latter becomes absolutely worthless.]

Canto 4, Brahmin 4

[This Brahmin briefly describes the condition of a dying man (verse nos. 1-4 and 6), the essential nature, divine attributes, magnificent qualities and glorious virtues of *Atma* (verse nos. 5, 17-22, 24-25), and the truthful path for emancipation and salvation (verse nos. 6-16, 22-23). This Brahmin is a continuation of Brahmin 3.]

1. When the *Atma* feels itself too weak and incapable of functioning with the declining abilities of the body due to old age, it appears to be under some hypnotic spell or delusion¹. At that time, all the vital factors of life, called the different *Prans* inside the body, come and present themselves before the *Atma* to serve it and to show their allegiance to their supreme authority which had been nourishing and sustaining them all along through the life of the creature in a dispassionate but benevolent form. (See also Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 37-38.)

After this that person (i.e. the *Atma*) accepts the essence of life (i.e. the vital factors or signs of life present in the form of consciousness, senses, energy, vitality, strength, vigour and stamina etc.) and establishes himself in the heart².

When the 'Purush' present in the eye (i.e. the conscious element present in the eye that empowers the eye to see; the 'life' factor of the eye; the faculty of sight present in the organ of the eye) abandons the latter, the eyes lose their power to see (1).

[Note--¹This is because the *Atma*, in its primary form and by its inherent nature, is never weak or incapable; it never declines or decays. So this perception about the *Atma* that 'I am becoming weak, incapable and old' is an erroneous and totally misplaced notion that is inspired by ignorance of the *Atma* and its reality. The *Atma* referred to here is the '*Jivatma*', or the living creature which thinks that it has become weak and infirm because of the declining body. It forgets that the real 'self', the pure conscious *Atma*, never becomes old. It is an eternal, imperishable and constant entity.

²That is why the heart continues to beat even when the other functions of the body cease or perform at a lower level. There might be a kidney failure, liver failure, paralysis of the limbs, failure of sight, and even the mind might not function properly in old age, but the heart still continues to beat ceaselessly.]

2. So, when all the different vital Prans or the life-giving and life-sustaining factors present in the body unite to pay their tribute to the Atma/soul, which is pure consciousness and the ruling deity for all the Prans, and discover that the Atma wishes to break free from the fetters of the gross body, they decide to accompany it in its journey (like loyal servants of a king). When this happens, the creature (closes its eyes and) stops to see¹.

In other words, even the faculty of sight present in the eye, or literally the Pran present in this organ, too abandons its separate existence as the faculty of sight and joins the other Prans to accompany them to serve their Lord and leaves the body with them. That is, in metaphysical terms, all these vital signs of life inside the body, called the different Prans or vital winds, start merging and becoming one with the main Pran (i.e. they merge themselves with the Atma)².

Similarly, when all the rest of the perceptions (such as hearing, smelling, touching or feeling, and tasting) collapse back into the pure consciousness from where they had immersed in the beginning and had been empowered to function by this pure consciousness earlier, it is said that the creature stops to smell, to speak, to taste, to hear, to feel and touch, to think, to learn, to know and recognise.

At that time, the upper part of his heart is very radiant and energetic (i.e. just before the time of death, the heart begins to beat faster), and the Pran (the vital wind which sustains life and which is usually treated as being synonymous with the Atma because Atma or soul is also a form of 'spirit' which is a euphuism for the Atma) leaves the gross body through any of the exist points of the body, such as the eye, the head or any other part (opening) of the body. As soon as the Pran leaves the body, all the organs follow suit— i.e. the body dies because the different senses present in it die, one by one.

At that time, the Atma is enlightened and specially empowered (because it is freed of the burdensome encumbrance of a frail and failing physical body which is gross and had been the cause of all limitations, entrapments and problems for the Atma)³.

It goes to the place (a habitat or a direction) which is compatible to the Atma's enhanced stature of being enlightened, wise, erudite, sagacious, self-realised and knowledgeable. The Atma is accompanied by knowledge, wisdom and erudition (that it has acquired during the present life), as well as by the deeds (i.e. the cumulative effects of deeds done during the present life) and its past experiences (i.e. the accumulated affects of his past deeds)⁴ (2).

[Note—¹This 'stops to see' is a figure of speech that implies that all the faculties that govern the various sense organs as well as the mind-intellect complex that perceive the outside world and serve the Atma of the creature by enlightening it about everything that exists in this material world and enabling it to enjoy them through the medium of the body—both the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect, and the gross body consisting of the various sense organs—begin to become dysfunctional one by one when their 'senses' of perception, called their 'Prans' or their conscious life, begin to retract or withdraw themselves from the external world and turn towards serving their Lord, i.e. the Atma which had been at the centre of their strength, power and authority, and which was their inspirer and nourisher, at the time when that Lord wishes to leave the body. Refer Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse nos.

36-38. Since all the ministers have come to attend the king/emperor, there is no one left in the far reaches of the kingdom (body) to bring in information of what is happening anywhere (world) that would enlighten the king/emperor about any happenings in the kingdom any more. So metaphorically, the Atma 'ceases to see'.

²It is like the case when the chief of a family falls ill. All members of the family whom that person had been lovingly serving all along his life think it their moral duty to chip in with all their might in order to serve him and ensure that his last days pass peacefully without any disturbance pertaining to this tormenting world.

³The *Atma* is inherently enlightened, erudite, sagacious and wise. But after it took up residence in this gross body, it got influenced by it just like a person gets affected by his immediate surroundings. It had to deal with the outside world through this body, and it was through this body that it learnt anything worth knowing about this world. Thus it had to depend upon the latter for all its information. So if the body was corrupt, the Atma got a corrupted version of the truth. It is like seeing something through a tainted glass—the sight gets affected by the colour of this glass, and the actual thing gets tainted and distorted. So how does the Atma realise what's wrong? It is through the medium of studying the scriptures, by listening to wise ones and seeking out the truth, and then implementing what has been found out. Once the Atma regains its original wisdom, which was up till now veiled in ignorance and delusions, it becomes a fount of 'Gyan', or a treasury of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, prudence and enlightenment. This in short is what is called 'self-realisation' when the Atma realises who or what its truthful nature and form is. Now, what is it? This question is answered briefly in this Brahmin below.

⁴That is, at the time of death, the Atma leaves this body a little wiser than its previous body because it has gained newer experiences, acquired newer knowledge and skills, and gained wisdom and enlightenment when it was present in the body during the current phase of its existence. Besides this, it also takes along with it the baggage of deeds and experiences when it leaves the body. The cumulative effect of deeds done by the creature in its past life as well as in its present life together forms the cumbersome baggage that the Atma carries along with it when it leaves the body (at the time of death). This 'baggage of deeds' decides where the Atma goes after leaving the present body.]

3. [An example of a worm or a caterpillar is taken here.] Just like a worm goes up to the tip of a blade of grass, contracts/retracts its body, lifts its fore part and then expands it to grasp the tip of another adjacent blade of grass, and then finally leaves its grip and lets go of the previous blade of grass to alight on the new blade, the Atma also withdraws all its tentacles (represented by the various sensory perceptions, the vital functions of the body etc.) into its self, discards its dependence on the present body and shakes off all delusions pertaining to its present existence, and finally makes its exit from the body in a dispassionate manner to enter in or take the shelter of a new body. From the perspective of Yoga, the conscious Atma withdraws its self from all corners of the body and accompanies the Pran as it rises up and makes its final exit from the body by way of the last exhaled breath at the time of death¹. [See also Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 36-38, and Brahmin 4, verse no. 1-2 above.]

At the time of death, the Atma trounces all the attractions of the sense organs and the material world by pulling away all the senses and perceptions and giving them rest in its own self, thereby attaining a state of ignorance² about the materialistic world and its existence (because once the faculties of various perceptions become dysfunctional, the Atma cannot know what is happening in this world outside, or that it even exists at all). After that, the Atma takes the shelter of another body (i.e. it leaves the present body and enters another body as effortlessly as it had entered the present body at the time of its birth) (3).

[Note--¹In this analogy of the *caterpillar* or the *worm*, the Atma is like the worm or the caterpillar, and the body of a creature is like the twig or the blade of grass. In both the cases, the body or the twig is merely a habitat for the living being represented by the caterpillar or the Atma. When one observes how a caterpillar goes from one twig to another, one would appreciate how ancient sages and seers, who were keen observers of the functioning of Nature, watched Nature at play and derived parallel metaphysical and philosophical allegories from them. For us in modern times, these philosophies and metaphysical concepts are best understood when we take examples from our daily lives. In this illustration, the caterpillar has been cited to illustrate how the Atma migrates from one body to another.

²The *ignorance* mentioned in this verse relates to the fact that the Atma had seen the world through the prism of its earlier body. The body is gross and perishable, but the Atma had not realised this fact till the last moment just before death. During this final phase, the Atma realises that what it had been treating all along as its truthful identity is not what it had thought it to be—i.e. the body that the Atma had begun to think was its real form was not the fact because now the Atma sees for itself that the body is suffering from so many diseases and has become decrepit; the body is fast decaying and collapsing. Therefore it cannot be the ‘real thing’ because had it been like the Atma it would not have faced this horrible state in which it has landed itself into. The body is not imperishable and eternal like the Atma, and the view that the Atma had of this world through the medium of the body was also a distorted version of the reality.

So, when the Atma becomes finally enlightened about the truth and realises the fact, it decides to abandon the falsehood personified by the body. But unfortunately, under the spell of delusions and the cumulative effects of its past deeds, instead of seeking emancipation and salvation by merging with the supreme transcendental primary Brahm, this Atma assumes another body in the false hope that this new body would give it more happiness and peace than the body that it possessed till now. This is the reason for it taking a rebirth in spite of it being wise and knowledgeable. And of course, this is the delusion which dogs the Atma even in its new life.]

4. [The example of a gold smith is cited here.] Just like a gold smith uses the gold of an old ornament to craft or mould new ornaments having a different shape and a completely new design, the Atma discards the old body along with its impurities (represented by Avidya, or the lack of knowledge, or the ignorance that had veiled that body) and assumes a new form as a Pittar (a revered spirit of dead ancestor), a Gandharva (a semi God who is regarded as celestial musician and considered senior in the heavenly hierarchy of semi Gods), a God, a Prajapati (the guardian of creation), Brahma (the creator), or any other form¹. It can also create new forms for itself depending upon its wishes² (4).

[Note--¹In this example, the gold smith creates new ornaments according to the skills and craftsmanship that he possesses, but the essential ingredient, the gold, remains the same. Similarly, all newer forms of the Atma have this basic ingredient—the Atma or the pure eternal consciousness of creation. But just like the gold smith who wishes to experiment with newer designs and shapes, the supreme transcendental Brahm too experiments with newer forms of bodies for the Atma. It is like a playful activity for the supreme Authority. The bodies of the heavenly Gods mentioned in this verse which are acquired by the Atma depend upon the level of wisdom and the quality of good deeds done by it during its current phase of life in this body—refer Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 33, 36.

²Likewise, the Atma creates new forms for itself depending upon the various unfulfilled Vasanas and Vrittis (i.e. the passions, yearnings, aspirations, hopes, expectations, etc. as well as the temperaments and habits that drive the behaviour and thoughts of a person and determine his personality and character) that the creature has

had while it lived in this life. The Atma uses them to decide which body would suit it best in order to accomplish these yet unfulfilled Vasanas and Vrittis. The Atma would then utilise the expertise and knowledge, experience etc. that it had gathered during its tenure in the body which has just died. Naturally, these will decide what new body the Atma can 'imagine' and create for itself.

For example, if during the lifetime of the creature the Atma had yearned to become someone who is an expert in music or arts, then at the time of death the Atma would endeavour to assume that body which is in consonant with its aspirations and yearnings. That is, it would try to become a musician or a skilled artisan in its new birth. This also explains the phenomenon that the Atma gets a new life as a result of a combinations of effects such as its different desires, wishes, yearnings, hopes, expectations and aspirations that it had in its previous life, as also its deeds and their cumulative effects, because all these factors together determine the various Vasanas and Vrittis that the Atma possesses at the time of death, or at the time of its exit from the present body.]

5. This Atma is an image of the venerable Brahm; it is Brahm personified. This Atma is blessed with the sublime, divine, holy and eclectic virtues that are so unique to the supreme Brahm. It is an embodiment of and full of the grand and glorious invigorating virtue known as 'Vigyan' and is therefore a fount of it; it abounds in this virtue. [Vigyan refers to the sublime virtues of enlightenment, erudition, wisdom, sagacity, truthful knowledge, intelligent thoughts and the power to contemplate and ponder deeply. It also includes the powers of discrimination, the powers of deep insight and rational analysis, the powers to hear and learn, and the powers to rationalise and research etc.]

In the same vein, the Atma is uniformly present in the form of the Mana (the mind and heart). In other words, the glorious qualities, the astounding powers and the magnificent potentials displayed by the mind as well as the heart are nothing but the exhibition of these virtues of the Atma.

The Pran (the quintessential vital signs of life in a living creature; the invigorating vital winds, especially the breath that keeps a creature alive) is also a manifestation of the Atma; it is nothing but the Atma in that form. Therefore, all the breathtaking wonders displayed by the Pran are nothing but the display of Atma's potentials and authority.

The Atma is the entity that is present in each of the organs of the body—such as the eye and the ear—to give them the innate ability and mystical potential to perform their respective functions. That is, the eye with its magnificent faculty of sight, and the ear with its stupendous powers to hear are revelations of the grand and astounding potentials of the venerable Atma.

The Atma has revealed itself in the form of the various elements of creation and gives each of them their importance, significance and value. Hence, the 'earth element' is a form of Atma (and that is why earth is like a loving 'mother' who cares for her child with all her might; it is in the bosom of the earth that all living beings find their habitat and sustenance, it is the earth that provides for all the resources needed to sustain life; and without earth life is just not tenable even as without the Atma the creature cannot live).

Similarly, the 'water element' is also an embodiment of the Atma (as is evident from the fact that a man cannot survive without water though he can do without food for quite some time; water is the first necessity of life and it flows inside the body of a man as his fluid content; the earth itself is covered by water for almost two third of its surface).

The 'wind/air element' is likewise composed of the Atma which has revealed itself in that form, lending vitality and the life-sustaining medium called the Pran to all living creatures.

The 'sky' element is a manifestation of the glorious Atma (and that is why it exhibits all the unique and astonishingly eclectic, sublime and glorious virtues of the Atma—such as being eternal, infinite, vast, fathomless, measureless, clean, uncorrupt, pure, colourless, invisible, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-permeating etc.; everything that exists in this creation has its existence and abode in the space of the sky, and there is nothing beyond the boundaries of the 'infinite' sky).

The honourable Atma is so esoteric, enigmatic, mystical, unique, inexplicable and especial that it presents a perfect picture of a classical paradox—it is endowed with eternal 'Tej' (meaning energy, vitality, vigour, strength, powers, potent, radiance and splendour) but displays no apparent signs of Tej inherently present in it (because it does not seem to shine, it remains invisible and does not appear to do anything on its own)¹.

The Atma appears to have 'Kaam' (different desires, yearnings, hopes, wishes, aspirations and passions) but it actually has no such trait in it (i.e. it is dispassionate, detached, indifferent, and without having a desire, yearning, passion or lust of any kind)².

In a similar fashion, the Atma appears to possess 'Krodh' (meaning anger, wrathfulness and vehemence) as one of its integral traits, but in actual fact it does not have even a trace of it³.

The ubiquitous Atma is an embodiment of the finest qualities and exemplary virtues in existence. These are collectively called the virtues of 'Dharma' (broadly meaning righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility of thoughts and conduct), and they form an integral part of the attributes of the honourable Atma. But it often appears that it does not have these sublime and divine qualities in it⁴.

What more can be said about this enigmatic, esoteric, indefinable and mysterious Atma which is all-pervading and all-incorporating! It is both visible in its manifestation as the different units and facets of creation, as well as invisible in its primary form as an attributeless and bland entity that has no qualifications and no definitions. It is both; it is therefore unique and unparalleled⁵.

The Atma appears to display characteristic feelings, moods, dispositions, emotions, sentiments and personality traits according to the deeds done by it (through the medium of the body that it possesses)⁶.

When the Atma does righteous and auspicious deeds, it becomes a revered, holy and honourable entity, while unrighteous and inauspicious deeds make it sinful, pervert, corrupted and dishonourable. The creature's Atma would therefore become righteous or unrighteous, auspicious or inauspicious, holy and revered or hated and despised, honourable or dishonourable according to the nature of deeds done by it.

Some wise ones say that this 'Purush' (i.e. the divine Atma living in the body of a man) is characterised by being a personification of Kaam. That is, a man is driven by his desires, ambitions and aspirations. He makes firm determinations and resolves in accordance with them, and then makes diligent efforts to ensure that they are fulfilled and bear fruit. Since each action produces a result, whether good or bad, each and every action of the Atma therefore produces a relevant reaction or affect. This would accumulate as the good or bad effects of the deeds done by the Atma, which would in turn affect its future destiny (5).

[Note—¹This stanza can be interpreted in a different way also. All living beings have the same Atma in them, whether they are humans or animals. But humans display

much greater degree of intelligence and energy, or 'Tej' in its various manifestations, as compared to the animals. Even amongst the humans, there are so many permutations and combinations of characters, qualities and virtues that no two persons are alike though they all have the same Atma. So this makes this Atma so formidable, awe-inspiring, unique and astonishing.

²The Atma lives in a gross body which has sense organs which in turn yearn to be pampered and get attracted to the material comforts and pleasures of the world. This leads to the impression that the Atma has the trait called 'Kaam', because it is the supreme authority in the body of the living being and symbolises its true self, and all the organs and the body itself is deemed to be serving the Atma and acting on its behalf. It is like the case whereby all that is happening in a king's kingdom are supposed to be done by him and he is held responsible for them. But actually the Atma is not at all involved in having any trait composedly called Kaam; it is neutral and indifferent to such notions and emotions. Refer Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 15-16 which state that the Atma remains inherently indifferent to, unconcerned with and detached from everything, and verse no. 21 which describes the state when a person has no desires of any kind.

³The Atma is of a noble disposition and of an exalted lineage because it is an image of Brahm, the supreme authority of creation which remains calm, quiet and tranquil, tolerant, forgiving and merciful, showing equanimity and fortitude even under the greatest of provocations. This is because if the king loses his composure and poise, he cannot rule with equanimity and fortitude, he cannot be rationale and judicious in his decisions and thoughts, he cannot be compassionate and even towards the opposing party to any dispute.

Further, one becomes angry when one's wishes and desires are not fulfilled. He becomes annoyed when some hindrance is caused in the pursuit of his aim. When some other person is perceived as an obstacle in the fulfillment of his desires, the man becomes angry with that person; he punishes others if they offend him. But this applies only till the time wisdom and erudition about the truthful nature of the Atma do not become known to the person. Since there is no entity other than the Atma for an enlightened person, there is no cause for him to become angry, and there is no one on whom he can become angry. This is the basic truth about the Atma. But when the same equitable, calm and peaceful Atma comes into contact with the outside world through the medium of the gross body, it shows such reactions of anger and wrathfulness which are part of external life. This happens because during the waking state of existence, the Atma has a notion of duality—that there is one 'own self' and one 'other person'. This erroneous perception of course is at the root cause of all the wrong notions that the Atma is accused of in this verse. Refer also to Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 31.

⁴The Atma lives in the body of a creature. This body is known to fall easy prey to sinful and unrighteous things because they are more often than not very enticing and attractive. Since the Atma cannot abandon the body till it lives in it, it also has to accompany the latter and, unwillingly though, participate in those unrighteous and inauspicious deeds. For example, when the man sees something very attractive, such as for an example a costly pen lying on the ground, his greedy mind would impulsively, instinctively force him to pick it up though for a fleeting moment his sub-conscious would warn him that this is not the right thing to do, but the man overrides this warning. So though the Atma does not want to steal this pen, it is helpless because it is a resident of a corrupt body driven by an equally corrupt mind.

This simple example would illustrate how the Atma becomes accused of being unrighteous and unlawful inspite of its immaculate nature.

⁵The Atma has a visible manifestation in the form of this visible, vibrant and lively world, but is actually so subtle, sublime and microscopic in nature that it cannot be actually seen or felt. The Atma has all the attributes of the sky element—i.e. it is invisible but takes the form of the body of the creature in which it resides.

This body of the individual creature is the ‘visible’ aspect of the Atma at the micro level, while the vast and fathomless universe spread all around us in its manifested form of Nature is the macro level ‘visible’ form of the Atma. It must not be forgotten here that the term Atma refers to pure consciousness in creation, and this term is a synonym for Brahm.

⁶For example the same man may be angry, callous and wrathful at one point of time, and remain calm and forgiving at another. He may appear diligent and enterprising now, but indolent and careless at other times. One set of circumstances might make him angry, anxious and restless, but at other times the same set of circumstances might not ruffle him, and he might deal with adversities with a cool and calm head. So the same Atma appears to have assumed different traits and roles.

The basic idea expressed in this verse finds its resonance in Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 22.

‘Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in you?’ (Holy Bible, Corinthians, 1/3/8.)

6. There is a relevant Shloka (a scriptural stanza or verse) in this connection—‘Wherever the person’s ‘Ling Deha’ (i.e. the ethereal form of his corporeal body; his Atma residing in the causal body) has fixed its attention, wherever it finds attraction, or whatever this Ling Deha wishes to have, the person’s latent desires, ambitions, yearnings and passions take him there. He goes there willingly and makes efforts to that end. Depending upon the type of deeds the person does in this world, he goes to the next world after death, but comes back here in order to fulfill his yet unfulfilled desires and also to suffer the consequences, good or bad, of the deeds done by him in his previous life.

Verily, those who do any deed with a desire for any result from them, are the ones who get trapped in this oscillating cycle of birth, death and rebirth, like a ball bouncing back and forth from the surface of the earth. On the other hand, those people who have no desire do deeds in a selfless manner, and therefore they do not get emotionally involved in the deeds done. They do deeds with full contentedness, and are satisfied with whatever they do, however it is done, without unnecessarily getting overworked and bewildered, worrying and becoming anxious about those deeds and their results. Such wise persons regard the world as an image of their own Atma, and they do deeds as a means of service to the Atma, for the benefit of the Atma—such people do not die with any vestige and remnant of desires, yearnings, wishes, passions, hopes, expectations, ambitions and aspirations as well as the consequences of doing various selfish deeds clinging to them at the time of their death. Obviously therefore, after death they are not pulled down to this mortal world to fulfill their yet unfulfilled desires and passions, or to suffer from the consequences of their deeds (because these deeds were done selflessly and without any desire for a reward). Such persons retain their pristine form of the Atma, which is Brahm personified. Consequentially, they, in the form of their truthful identity known as the Atma, become one like Brahm himself. In other words, they merge with Brahm and obtain the final emancipation and salvation for themselves. [See also Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 8-34 in this context.] (6)

[Note—‘The Lord shall render to everyone according to his deeds’ (Holy Bible, Romans, 2/6.)]

7. When a wise, erudite and self-realised enlightened person has eliminated all his Kaam, i.e. all desires, hopes, expectations, volitions, yearnings and passion etc. from his heart, when he has broken free from such fetters that shackle ordinary persons to this body and world, than that mortal being becomes immortal as if he were an

embodiment of the elixir that provides eternal life full of beatitude and felicity, known as Amrit. He attains Brahm here in this world¹ (because Brahm is a fount of this Amrit).

Just like a serpent abandons its dead cuticle outside its hole, and that cuticle lies lifeless on the ground while the serpent moves around unconcerned about it, the body of such enlightened, self-realised, selfless and dispassionate person lies in this world like a corpse while he becomes free from its limitations and encumbrances².

Being infused with the divine spirit of Brahm, or having been enlightened about his Atma's primary immaculate nature, its divinity and supernatural powers, its magnificent majesty and astoundingly auspicious virtues kindled by the fire of self-realisation, such a person's Pran (the vital wind which sustain life in a body; this word is sometime used to indicate the Atma because without the Atma the body cannot survive and also because Atma is called a 'spirit' which is a euphuism for the pure conscious Atma) lives in this world virtually without the body. It is freed from its encumbrances³,

Hearing this, the king of Videha, Janak, became overwhelmed with gratitude and said to Yagyavalkya, 'Oh Lord! I donate one thousand cows (or gold coins) to you for the wisdom that you have given me' (7).

[Note—¹This heightened enlightenment makes the man aware of the truth that it is the presence of various desires, ambitions and aspirations, briefly called Kaam, that compels him to remain engrossed and indulgent in this world of sense organs and material comforts and pleasures. This body becomes the medium for the man's interaction with this world, and both the world as well as the body are transient and perishable. The only entity in this complex setup which is neither perishable nor transient is the Atma, which is by the way the truthful 'self' of the man.

So a wise and prudent man cuts at the root of all problems—he enterprisingly vanquishes his Kaam. Once the root is uprooted, the blooming tree would automatically wither and fall away. In other words, such an enlightened man is able to find liberation and deliverance here in this world itself. This is called 'Kaivalya Mukti' or literally the only one of its kind of liberation and deliverance which has no equal and no parallel. That is, it is the best form of Mukti because there is no cause for re-birth again.

²An enlightened man lives in this world and goes about his normal duties, but with a sense of deep renunciation and dispassion. He is non-involved with the deeds done by the body in the sense that he is not emotionally and mentally attached to them or their rewards. Even if his body suffers in this world, he pays no heed to it and treats it as a temporary habitat of the Atma, a dwelling that has to be abandoned one day. This wisdom frees him from all tensions and agitations that are accompaniments of emotional and mental involvement with this deluding and artificial world which is the source of all pains and miseries. This typical state of existence is called 'Jivan Mukti' which is a stepping stone for 'Videha Mukti'. It has been explained elaborately in Annapurna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition.

The Atma is known as the soul or spirit of the creature; it has no definable shape or body or form. It is like the air element which has no form, shape or body. Air is present inside as well as outside a pitcher. The body is like this pitcher. So when this body is discarded, the Atma present inside it, represented by the air present inside the pitcher, simply merges with the air outside when the pitcher is broken. The air does not need the pitcher to stay. This basic realization that the Atma does not need a body to stay, or to act as its habitat or dwelling, enables an enlightened man to get rid of the necessity of having a body. Such an enlightened person realises that the body is an obstacle in his liberation. Liberation here means breaking free from the limiting boundary created for the Atma by the body and allowing it to merge with its macrocosmic form known as Brahm present everywhere. The Pran present inside the

body is the vital wind, and wind has no independent name except the hypothetical ones given to it just for the purpose of understanding and analyzing the facts. Just like the air present inside the pitcher merges with the air present outside it when the pitcher is broken, the various vital winds present inside the body of the creature too merge with the air element present outside its body when the creature discards the body. This is Videha Mukti.

That is why it is believed that the spirit of great persons—such as a wise teacher or great scholars, sages and seers, realised souls and enlightened ones, prophets and angels, live with their disciples and followers just like parents live with their children, to help and guide them in their journey through this world. Such enlightened souls do not go to heaven as such, nor do they assume another body. They remain present everywhere in an invisible but ubiquitous form just like the fire or the air element, ready to make their presence felt when the need arises.

³Ordinarily, the Pran or the Atma would need a gross body as their habitat, but for a self-realised and enlightened person, there is no need for the body. They exist in a plane where the body has lost its relevance. This state of existence is known as ‘Samadhi’ where the third and fourth states of existence of the pure consciousness prevail perpetually. These states are called Sushupta and Turiya, and they are marked by eternal and eclectic blissfulness and ecstasy.

‘Glory, honour and peace to everyman that worketh good’ (Holy Bible, Romans, 2/10.)

8. In this context of liberation and emancipation, called Moksha, there is this Shloka—an enlightened person thinks that ‘this path of enlightenment and realisation of the great and ultimate Truth is very subtle, secret and esoteric; it is like a broad avenue, stretching infinitely; and it is most ancient and traditional. I am very fortunate to have found this path; I have researched this path leading to my freedom and deliverance. In other words, I have become self-realised’.

Those who are patient, courageous and fortitudinous, those who have firmness of conviction and abiding faith in the Truth and are steady in their spiritual pursuit, not wavering from it under any delusive enticements, those who are well-versed in the essentials of Brahm—such people are able to obtain Mukti (freedom, deliverance, emancipation and salvation) in this world itself (i.e. in this present life). When they leave their bodies at the time of death, they go to the heaven if they so wish¹. Such persons go on rising higher and higher, and they reach the higher echelons of heaven, i.e. they are able to reach what is known as the citadel where the supreme transcendental Brahm is symbolically said to reside—the Brahm Loka² (8).

[Note--¹There is no contradiction between observation made in verse nos. 7 and 8. when a person realises that his Atma is Pran, and Pran is a form of vital wind or air element, specially breath, he leaves the body and becomes universally present in the vast space of the sky like the air element that pervades throughout it in the ‘spirit form’. A spirit can go anywhere it likes; there is no wall which can stop it from migrating from this world to the other world known as ‘heaven’. This explains why and how we invoke ‘great souls’ when we need their help to overcome our difficulties in this life in this world by praying to them and raising our hands upwards towards the heavens. Just like lightening or fire can make its appearance anytime anywhere if the circumstance are favourable and conducive, such great souls too reveal themselves when fervent appeal is made to them by a devotee who has firm belief in the existence of the universal spirit.

From the perspective of the Upanishads, when a man realises his true self and the importance of the Atma, he becomes dispassionate towards the attachments of this artificial world. He treats everyone as an embodiment of Brahm, the supreme Soul personified, and thereby his entire outlook changes for the better. He treats all with

equanimity and tolerance, compassion and love, because he sees his Lord in all the forms that exist in this world. He shows respect and honour even to the humblest as he would to his Lord. Naturally, such a man is loved by all the people and he becomes the dear and friend of all the creatures. As a result, all fears vanish and he becomes carefree and happy. At the same time, he would have become mentally and emotionally detached from all the deeds done by the body, he would treat all the deeds done by his body as a service to the same Lord revealed as the world, and all his actions would become selfless and a wholesome fire sacrifice done as his offering to his supreme Lord. He would not have to suffer from any worries regarding this body and the world because he would have realised that both of them are perishable and the only thing that is 'not perishable' is his exalted 'self' known as his Atma which is pure consciousness and a fount of eternal bliss and felicity. So why should he hanker after those things that are non-eternal and non-blissful when he is fortunate enough to have discovered the fountain of beatitude and felicity? This realisation automatically fills him with a sense of elation and ecstasy at having discovered the 'truthful' reality of things. It would be tantamount to being freed from the fetters of ignorance and delusions that had been shackling him for so many generations of birth and death. This symbolic 'breaking free from the fetters of ignorance' is akin to obtaining Mukti or liberation and deliverance while still alive in this world and living with a body. Such a man is 'most fortunate' because he has the best of the two worlds—he gains the eternal bliss of freedom which makes his life full of happiness that prevails in the so-called heaven, and at the same time he continues to enjoy the world and get due respect and honour from his compatriots and peers.

²When he ultimately dies, he moves out of the body like a snake moving out of its discarded cuticle. He dies peacefully and contentedly, having no regrets or any sort of attachments with what is left behind, and no desire to come back to retrieve his lost belongings and finish off any of the unfinished tasks of this life. Like a freed bird flying off from captivity, the soul or Atma of a self-realised man just rises higher and higher like the wind/air element—which by the way is the true nature of his Atma—going up and up, never to come back again and get trapped once more. The higher it goes the lighter it becomes, until it virtually goes beyond the reach of even the Gods residing in the heaven. To illustrate this phenomenon, we in our modern world know that as we rise up, the air becomes thinner and lighter, and when we cross the atmosphere of the earth, the earth's gravitational pull cannot bring us back. Then we reach the realm of the planets which are symbolically like the 'Gods present in the heaven', and these planets have their own gravitational pulling mechanism. But as the journey continues farther into the void of space and we enter the inter-galactic space, there is no one to pull us then, and we are lost for ever as far as the earthlings are concerned. In outer space, nothing decays—everything becomes eternal and infinitely lasting. It continues to live for ever because energy and elementary forms of matter do not perish but only change their forms in this cosmos.]

9. That esoteric and eclectic path of liberation and deliverance found by an enlightened soul is said to have different shades of colour. Some say it is of a white shade, some say it is blue, others describe it as having a yellow tinge, and some say it is green, while others called it red coloured¹. That path has been witnessed first hand by a wise and enlightened person who is well steeped in the knowledge of the truthful, supreme and transcendental Brahm. Only those who have done righteous and auspicious deeds in their lives, those who have a divine spirit kindled inside to endow an ethereal radiance and illumination to them, and those who are well versed in Brahm—only such people are able to tread on this great and noble path. By following this spiritual path, the auspicious man becomes radiant with divine energy and

acquires a glorious halo; he becomes a practical expert in the knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm (9).

[Note—¹It has been said earlier in Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 20 that the different Naadis in the body have these colours depending upon the impulses carried by them. See note to that verse. It has been said that during the sleeping state of existence of a creature when it has detached itself from the external gross world and exists in the subtle world of the self, the different Prans move along these Naadis because they have withdrawn themselves from the external sense organs of the gross body. That is why the sense organs of a sleeping man become virtually dysfunctional but all his internal organs keep on working as usual. This property of the Pran to move in the Naadis is highlighted in Upanishads dealing with Yoga practices. Since a sleeping man is as oblivious to the world outside and its numerous stimuli as the man who has reached the stage of self-realisation, the parallel between the two paths by which his Pran moves is apt here, and the colours of the path mentioned here is just to link these two concepts. By being able to experience the blessedness obtained by treading upon this spiritual path, the noble and enlightened soul of the man is able to have a first hand knowledge of what consists of 'Brahm-realisation'. He withdraws from the world of grossness and lives in the world of subtlety.]

10. Those who are stupid enough to worship and adore 'Avidya' (literally meaning lack of truthful knowledge or awareness of the auspicious and noble path to follow which only can give eternal peace and liberation for the soul/Atma) fall into a deep pit of darkness (symbolising ignorance of the reality and truth, and therefore doing things that are trapping and shackling instead of being liberating and providing deliverance from this mundane world and the endless cycle of sorrows and pains as well as of birth and death)¹.

Similarly, those who pursue 'Vidya' (here referring to learning the words of the scriptures by heart, but not understanding their basic tenets, their spirit, their intent and purpose) also fall into a dark pit (of ignorance and delusions), but it is darker² (10).

[Note—¹The word *Avidya* generally means lack of truthful knowledge and awareness of the reality, or being ignorant about the facts. In metaphysical sphere it refers to lack of knowledge about the supreme Truth and absolute Reality known as Brahm and the pure conscious Atma. In other words, those who do not know who they really are and what their truthful identity is, which however is the Atma which is a microcosmic revelation of the supreme cosmic Transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm, think that their body is their 'self' and the world has a 'permanent and real' existence. They remain engrossed in doing various deeds, endlessly pursuing the material objects of the world as if that is all there is to it, gratifying their sense organs and seeking permanent comfort and pleasure from such pursuits, thinking that they would successfully achieve it. Such ignorant people fall into a trap of delusions which binds them perpetually to falsehoods and deceit, and prevents them from seeking the 'truth' and endeavouring to get liberation and deliverance from the shackle of ignorance and delusions. The 'dark pit' is a metaphor for remaining ever surrounded by ignorance and delusions regarding the 'real truth', and erroneously supposing that the 'apparent truth' seen by them in the form of the material world is the 'real truth', a situation which is like the mirage in a desert.

²The word *Vidya* has an opposite meaning to *Avidya*. On the face of it, it seems absurd that knowledge and erudition can lead one to a pit which is darker than the one in which a person who has no knowledge and erudition falls. But *Vidya* has a different connotation here—it refers to truthful and intelligent, well thought out and well researched knowledge and erudition, marked by sagacity, wisdom and enlightenment that can lead the creature to lift its self higher and higher in the

spiritual realm. If the study of scriptures is reduced to mere learning by rote the hymns to be recited at formal rituals, if the Vedas are learnt to perform elaborate fire sacrifices to earn name and worldly glory as well as acquire material wealth and prosperity only, if the Upanishads are studied to gain acclaim and fame and get renown as a great orator, scholar and debater, then the very purpose of such sacrifices, recitation of hymns and studying the Upanishads is defeated. Only a person who understands the actual intent and purpose of the tenets of the scriptures, who is able to implement their sublime and profound tenets, their great and noble teachings, their astounding axioms and maxims in his daily life, is deemed to have attentively read them, have holistically studied them and have sincerely learnt them. It is only then that he can expect to benefit spiritually from them and progress on the path of obtaining emancipation and salvation for his Atma or soul. Otherwise this learning is reduced to a worldly means to gain fame, name, reputation and material well being, and the person remains trapped in the pit of worldly delusions marked by attachments and attractions, never ending desires and hopes, endless expectations and aspirations.

This pit of darkness obtained by such distorted knowledge or 'false' knowledge (i.e. the knowledge which does not have any pith and gravity, the knowledge that is hollow, the knowledge which is perfunctory and superficial, the knowledge which does not have any eternal value, and the knowledge that can give worldly fame and a false notion of being learned and scholarly, but that which cannot provide permanent liberation from the shackle of ignorance and delusion) is darker and deeper as compared to the one obtained by outright ignorance because an ignorant man can be excused on the ground of his ignorance and stupidity as well as lack of opportunity to acquire knowledge, but a man who has been fortunate enough to have had a golden opportunity of studying the scriptures and having the communion of great and learned persons cannot be excused on these practical grounds. He is more sinful and guilty, and should deserve a greater punishment because he is not ignorant and stupid. So what is he then? Well, he is deluded and misguided. He thinks that the charms of this world that are showered upon a learned man should be enjoyed first, and such nonsense as liberation and deliverance can wait! What more stupidity can there be, especially when the scriptures have repeatedly emphasised the fact that the world and its charms are temporary, and the permanent peace and happiness are attainable only by self-realisation. If this is the case, then what have they actually learnt by studying them? It is like the case of a man entering a medical college to gain the title of a doctor just to earn money, but has no deep and practical knowledge of this science, and extracts money from his patients before referring them to someone else when the case deteriorates. Or a lawyer who might have learnt the law book by heart, can quote various judgments and sections of law, but does not know how to apply them in practice. Such a lawyer would only ruin the case in the long run. He knows next to nothing about law in practice but dons the lawyer's robe just to earn money.

Therefore, those who blindly follow knowledge in the form of 'Trividya'—or the knowledge contained in the three Vedas, in its letter only without delving into the spirit and the knowledge contained in the hymns of the Vedas, without understanding the implication of and the philosophy contained in that knowledge, also enter the realm of darkness, but their darkness is more dense, more intense, more grave, more dangerous and more serious than the ones who are openly ignorant. They cannot expect any leniency and forgiveness because they are not only cheating themselves but others too. They become proud, haughty and arrogant; they are imposters and frauds.

This is a very important verse. The first observation is easy to understand—those who are materialistic and indulgent in this deluding world of sensual pleasures and material comforts as if there would be no tomorrow fall in the trap of delusion created by the ignorance of the truth. But they can get out of it, they can expect reprieve, and they can be excused for their demeanors and misdeeds on the ground that they are

ignorant, stupid and foolish; they do not actually know that they are on the wrong trajectory. They have a chance of being taught the correct thing, choose the correct path, and amend themselves accordingly.

But instead of them, those people who are haughty, arrogant and hypocrites, who claim that they are scholars, have learned the Vedas by heart, incessantly chant the hymns without even knowing the meaning of the verses they are chanting almost like a parrot--they can perform elaborate religious rituals involving such recitation, but they still remain bound by fetters to this deluding, artificial and materialistic world, because they reap material benefits from their scriptural knowledge without gaining any spiritual benefit from them. Such people expect and get honour from the society and are even looked upon by the latter for advice and guidance, but they fail to provide it to them because they do not have any depth of knowledge themselves. They are therefore more despicable and reproachable because they mislead others and misuse their trust in them; they hanker for fame and money, and they have missed the golden chance of walking on the path of spiritual awakening, leading to their liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle their souls to this endless cycle of birth and death although they have had the chance to read and study the scriptures which have the intention of showing this particular path to the seeker. This is a privilege which was denied to their brethren who are outright ignorant and have never studied the scriptures. Therefore their guilt and sin is greater than those who are basically ignorant and stupid. So they can't be excused; there is no reprieve for them.

[Refer verse no. 21 in this context.]

11. Those who are ignorant, stupid and foolish, they obtain a world full of darkness, the world which lacks peace and tranquility as well as bliss and happiness, even after death (11).

12. If a person (i.e. his Atma which is his true self) has become wise enough to realise who (or what) he (or it) actually is, then say why would a man have to suffer all the miseries and worries related to this body (which is however perishable, gross and inconsequential); what desires would he be left with; what worldly passions he can ever have; what bodily gratifications can he ever seek? (12).

[Note--An ignorant person thinks that his identity is his body—that is why we usually and normally identify a man by his face, appearances, the colour of his skin, his thumb print, the colour of his eye etc. But this is a materialistic world's view point. A person who knows Vedanta trashes this view—he says that the Atma, and not the body, is the true 'self' of the individual. A man undertakes too much pain and suffering to give himself comfort and happiness—e.g. he wishes to sleep on a soft bed so that the body feels comfortable, he takes a bath to clean the body, he applies soap and lotion and different kinds of creams to pamper his body, he accumulates wealth for the comfort and pleasure of his body. But will all these give him real peace and happiness? The answer is a resounding 'no'—for, if his 'self' or his Atma is not at peace, the body cannot give him any kind of lasting peace. That is why when a man is perfectly relaxed and tranquil, satisfied and contented with himself we say 'he is at peace with himself' where the word 'himself' refers to his true identity, the 'self' or the Atma, and not his 'body'.]

13. A person is truly realised and enlightened (about the true and primarily divine and holy nature of the Atma, the supreme soul, the pure consciousness, the divine and holy spirit that is the truthful identity of that person) who enters this gross, perishable and faulty body as the holy Atma, and then performs all the worldly deeds that are destined to be done by this Atma through the medium of this body, but with full awareness of the truth. He is universally contented because whatever is being done by

anyone in this world is deemed to be also done by him in the sense that the same universal Atma, for the satisfaction of which deeds are basically done and which is present in his body, is also present in another body which does the other deed that is not being directly done by him.

Hence, such a wise and self-realised man is said to be the doer of all deeds (but remains free from their consequences). All the worlds are his, and he personifies them all. In other words, there is no sense of duality (because he knows the universality of the Atma) (13).

[Note--A person is deemed to be realised, enlightened, wise and erudite who has understood and realised the true nature of his Atma which has taken an abode in his body which is full of so many faults and shortcomings, and which is an opponent of wisdom and enlightenment. Such a person is very fortunate and fulfilled in this world. Indeed, such a person realises that it is the Atma that does everything in this world through the medium of the body. This world belongs to the Atma, which is its Lord, and, in essence, that Atma is the world itself because nothing matters except the 'truth', and the Atma is the only Truth. The reason is that the conscious Atma of the individual creature is a personification of the supreme Transcendental Consciousness of the entire creation known as Brahm, the ultimate Truth of creation. Therefore, there is basically no difference between the individual's own Atma, and the wider revelation of Brahm as this world. Since Brahm is the supreme doer and enjoyer of deeds, since this world is a manifestation of that Brahm and Brahm is an embodiment of all that exists in this creation, it follows that whatever the enlightened and self-realised man does is being done not by the gross body but by the universal and divine Soul known as the truthful Brahm.

There is nothing in the world except the Atma that is all-pervading and all-encompassing, the life-giving and vibrant natural energy of creation that keeps the world alive and active. There are two things worth noting here in relation to the Atma and the world—viz. first is the fact that it is the Atma, as the true identity of the person, which does everything in this world, albeit through the medium of the body in which the Atma resides, and second, the world has its existence because of the Atma; it's relevant because of the Atma.

The world is active and alive because all the entities present in it also have an Atma in them. Since the Atma is immutable, indivisible and one whole entity, it follows that the Atma of the individual and the Atma of the rest of the world are the one and the same entity, only having different forms just like air or water assuming different names and forms according to the vessel in which they are found. If it were not for the Atma, the world would cease to exist; the world would be dead; there would be no life on this earth, and the individual about whom we are talking about would also not exist.

'I will dwell in them and walk with them' (Holy Bible, Corinthians, 11/6/16.)

14. While living in this body, if we are fortunate enough to realise and become enlightened about the Atma, as well as the absolute Reality and irrefutable Truth known as Brahm, we become fulfilled. If not, we perish. Those who do realise this fact obtain the fount of eternal bliss and happiness, called Amrit. Others have only to suffer (14).

15. When a man witnesses or experiences first hand that supreme Lord of the past and the future, the Lord who is self-illuminated and who illuminates the world of the past and the future (i.e. the Lord who was in the beginning and who would be there when everything ends; the Lord who is eternal and omnipresent), then the man need not fear from 'Ishan' and seek protection from him for himself (15).

[Note--When a wise person realises that the Atma is the all-pervading universal Soul which is pure consciousness present in all living beings, there would be no cause of any kind of ill-will, hatred and animosity; the man would look towards all the creatures with equanimity and respect. So there will be no occasion for any kind of fear from any quarter, because a wise, erudite, self-realised and enlightened man would see his Lord everywhere, even as *Ishan*. Ishan is one of the angry forms of Lord Shiva known as Rudra—meaning anger and wrathfulness personified. People fear him because of the fact that besides being a personified form of anger, this God is also the annihilator of creation as Lord Shiva. So no one is sure when he would get annoyed, and everyone fears him. But only ‘non-realised and non-enlightened’ persons think in this manner, for this Ishan is also one of the manifestations of the supreme Atma known as the universal Brahm. Since this Brahm is also the ‘self’ of the individual man as his Atma, it follows that there is nothing to fear from this awesome and terrifying Ishan simply because he is none else but the merciful and loving Brahm who is kind and compassionate towards all his creation because the latter is its own offspring.

With such a broad perspective and holistic view of this world, there would be no cause of fear from any ‘quarter’ because everything and everyone is a manifestation of one single universal Brahm. By the way, the word ‘Ishan’ also means the north-east corner or ‘quarter’ of the celestial globe.

‘We are (all) the children of God’ (Holy Bible, Romans, 8/16.); ‘If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another’ (Holy Bible, John, 1/4/11.)]

16. That under whose authority and command the cycle of day and night moves along in an endless circle of one year after another, that which is the light of all lights (i.e. that which is the primary and principle ‘spark or torch of life’ which acts as the basic source from which the rest of the entire living creation has derived its own individual spark of life in the form of its life-giving consciousness, its energy, vitality, vigour and strength)—that supreme, transcendental and all powerful majestic entity is worshipped and honoured by the Gods as the ‘Aayu’¹ (आयु) of the world and its creatures (16).

[Note--¹The word *Aayu* means the age, the life span and the time for which anything or anyone lives; the period of existence of anything. The period of one year is a symbolic representation of one full life cycle of a creature, right from its birth, its growth into an adult, and its decline during old age till its death. Then the creature takes a new birth symbolised by the repeat of the same cycle of days and nights as well as the four seasons. Each unit of the year—the day, the night and the season—are well regulated. There is a fixed time when the sun and the moon would rise and set, thereby determining the coming and going of the day and the night. The seasons too follow a set pattern. There must be some supernatural authority that regulates this cycle, and this authority is known as Brahm.

The term *Aayu* refers to the Atma here because it is the Atma which lives one full term in the body—right from the time the latter is born in this world till its death when the Atma leaves it and migrates to another body to repeat the cycle once again just like the day and night and the seasons that form the year. In other words, *Aayu* has been used here as a metaphor for one unit of the Atma’s endless journey in the cycle of birth and death of the body till the time finally comes when it finds rest at the ‘end of the year’ by merging itself with its primary source, the Brahm.

At the worldly plane we say that a man has died because his ‘age’ is finished, his ‘time’ is up, or that his ‘Aayu’ has finished, and that he has died at a ‘mature age’ implying that he has lived one full term in this body. When the ‘duration and tenure’ of his life on the earth in this body comes to an end, he dies. The important point here is we forget that the ‘man’ we are talking about is the Atma and not the body in which it lives.

This source is likened to an eternal fount of 'light' much like we have a main candle from which we light smaller candles or earthen lamps filled with oil. The word 'light' is a metaphor for life and consciousness as well as for enlightenment, erudition, sagacity and wisdom. The Atma of the creature has all these unique attributes—it is illuminated, it is consciousness, it is enlightened, it is erudite, it is sagacious and it is wise. So, just as the 'light' of the candle can be perpetually kept alive by lighting a new candle before the previous one consumes its wax and vanishes forever, the light of consciousness is also kept alive even if the body dies and vanishes forever, or finally even if the Atma merges with its primary source, the Brahm. New forms of life, having new light of consciousness, can always emerge from this Brahm because the latter harbours life and consciousness in their most subtle forms as its integral being. This is just like the case when new fire is kindled from firewood by vigorously rubbing it, though there is no visible sign of fire apparent anywhere at all.

The celestial sun is the most vivid form of light in the creation. When the sun is shining, the light of a lamp is of no value and consequence; it appears to be dull and dark in comparison to the brilliance and dazzle of the splendid sun. Likewise, the individual Atma also appears to be dull and lackluster as compared to the brilliance and potentials of the universal Soul. But this is only true for those who are ignorant of the truth about the Atma and think that the Atma is tainted by the faults associated with the body in which it resides. Primarily, the Atma and Brahm have the same 'light' illuminating them, and 'light' has only one single identity. There are no 'two' forms of light.]

17. That in which all the five primary elements of creation (such as the space, air, fire, water and earth), all the five disembodied beings called the 'Panchjans' (the Gandharvas or celestial residents of heavens who are semi Gods, the other Gods, the Pittars or the spirit of dead ancestors, the non-Gods called Asurs or demons, and the Rakshas or cruel demons) as well as the Akash or the sky element (which has the virtue of being formless, attributeless and fathomless, which is eternal, measureless and infinite) are established, have their foundation, and from which they had all originated in the beginning—I regard that stupendous, eclectic, indescribable and divine entity known as the Atma as a personification and an image of the supreme transcendental imperishable Brahm who himself is like Amrit (the ambrosia of eternity, bliss and happiness) personified.

Since that holy and sublime Atma resides in my own bosom as my real 'self' and my truthful identity, that Brahm is also no different from 'me' because Atma and Brahm are synonymous with each other. Hence I am also like Amrit myself because I know, or have realised, the truthful essence of myself in the form of Brahm (17).

[Note--In short, a realised person says that he has become aware of his true self as his Atma, that his individual Atma is synonymous with the supreme Atma or Soul of the creation, that the Atma known as Brahm is pure and unadulterated consciousness, and that this Brahm manifested as the Atma is a fount of eternal beatitude and felicity. Therefore the person realises that he too is also a fount of Amrit. This gives him eternal peace and happiness, which are nevertheless the main objective of acquiring the knowledge of the 'self'.]

18. Those who are learned, sagacious and erudite enough realise that this supreme and magnificent entity that is beyond definition and description, i.e. the Atma which is pure consciousness and an embodiment of Brahm, is the fundamental essence, the basis and foundation as well as the originating and driving force of everything that exists. In other words, it is the Atma that constitutes the fundamental basis of all the forms of Prans that are responsible for sustaining life in this creation (i.e. the essential

factor that makes life possible in this creation, such as the various vital winds, the energy and the consciousness present in the body of creature that enables it to 'live' and perform so many deeds in this world; the essence of what is broadly known as 'life'; the fundamental and most important factor without which life is just not possible). It is the Atma which constitutes the elementary power and authority that enables the eye to function as a medium of sight. It is the Atma that empowers the ear to carry on with its majestic function of hearing. And it is the Atma which is at the core of the functioning of the Mana (mind and heart; rational as well as emotional thoughts) of a creature, controlling it and empowering it to exhibit its astounding abilities.

Those who have such an eclectic and holistic view of the Atma regard it as eternal and without a beginning, as being most ancient and traditional. This Atma is beyond comprehension and purview of the mind-intellect apparatus; it is not possible to define it in words; it is not possible to grasp its magnificence and glories (18).

19. That Brahm manifested as the pure conscious Atma can be subtly witnessed, experienced or perceived when one turns one's mind inwards; when he becomes introspective and contemplative. One would then find that Brahm has no ambiguity, no duality, no parallel, no seconds and no doubts and confusions about it. Anyone who sees these taints in Brahm, who is otherwise taintless and faultless, immaculate, perfect and uncorrupt, is destined to die (because ignorance and delusions which create this erroneous perception about the supreme immaculate and taintless entity, lead to one's spiritual downfall and denigration, and such degrading or fallen stature is tantamount to death.) (19)

20. That Brahm, which ought to be viewed universally and uniformly, is immeasurable, fathomless, endless and boundless; it is unmoving, stable and steady; it is pristine pure, uncorrupt, immaculate and untarnished; it is more subtle than the sky element; it is without a birth or beginning (i.e. it is immortal and eternal, being imperishable and infinite by nature); and it is also known as the great and imperishable entity addressed by the term Atma (20).

[Note--This verse clearly states that there is no difference between the pure conscious Atma or soul of the living being/creature and the supreme, transcendental Brahm. In fact, the latter is the macrocosmic form of the former.]

21. An enlightened, wise, self-realised, erudite and sagacious Brahmin (a person who is knowledgeable about the essence and truth of Brahm) should endeavour to learn about Brahm, and think of and contemplate upon nothing else but Brahm. He should not allow himself to get entangled in a web of words (i.e. get caught in different philosophies, discourses, debates, discussion, theories, ideas and views), for they are fruitless exercises and verbal acrobatics done by the faculty of speech (21).

[Note--This verse clearly advises that a true Brahmin should be focused in his spiritual pursuit. Trying to consult a number of doctors to treat a patient only kills the patient because all the doctors give different opinions and prescriptions. One should select a good doctor before starting treatment and then stick to that treatment. Likewise, one should select the path to follow, and the teacher to guide him on that path, with due diligence and enquiry. But once the path is chosen and the teacher selected, one must be focused on his destination and stick to it.

There is another connotation of this verse—it implies that a person, who is a true Brahmin, should endeavour to acquire the knowledge of the 'spirit', the essence and the truthful meaning of the words of the scriptures, and not merely learn those words

by heart to perform different ritual, without knowing the hidden and subtle meaning of the different hymns or verses that form the text of the scriptures. By merely reciting the words, or by merely engaging oneself in endless debates and discussions about what the different scriptures say about one or the other point of metaphysics, theology or spiritualism, is a waste of time and misuse of the faculty of speech. This faculty should instead be used to teach others about the truth and reality, instead of trying to show one-upmanship in scriptural learning.

Refer verse no. 10 in this context.]

22. [Like verse no. 5, this verse describes the glorious virtues and divine attributes of the supreme Atma.]

That stupendous, magnificent and majestic entity known as the enigmatic and divine Atma is most exalted and great, without a birth or a beginning, and is an embodiment or fount of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment.

It resides (or sleeps, reclines) in the subtle sky or space present in the heart, called the 'Hridayakash'. It keeps everything that exists under its control and command, and is the unquestioned Lord and Master of all.

It neither gets any kind of further enhancement in its exalted stature by doing righteous and auspicious deeds, nor does it get demoted by doing any unrighteous and inauspicious deeds. [This is because it is never involved in doing any deed; it is the body that does them. The Atma is a neutral and dispassionate observer of everything being done in this world by the creature's body.]

It is the supreme Lord of all living beings; it is their God (i.e. it is honoured, revered and worshipped by them), and it is their well wisher, protector and sustainer.

In order to maintain the balance between the various forces of Nature, to restrict the individual units of creation from going out of hand and becoming wayward, to maintain propriety and probity of thought and conduct, to enforce truthfulness, auspiciousness and righteousness in this creation, to maintain dignity, decorum, rank and status of all individual entities of this creation, to ensure that the creature can find a means to cross over from this mundane existence and reach its ultimate resting place with the supreme Brahm, to enable the supreme Authority (i.e. Brahm) to exercise its control and command over each individual creature of this creation, and to act as a medium between the individual and the Supreme Emperor of creation (i.e. Brahm), this Atma acts like a bridge.

[That is, the Atma, which is the pure consciousness residing in all living beings, helps to link the two ends of the creation, one end consisting of the mundane, mortal, artificial, deluding and perishable, and the other end consisting of the ethereal, sublime, truthful, imperishable and eternal. It enlightens the inner self of the creature and provides it with bliss and happiness; it removes the cause of darkness which creates all the unhappiness and miseries for the creature.]

Brahmins, or those who are learned, erudite, sagacious and well versed about Brahm, come to know or realise this Brahm by studying the Vedas, by doing various fire sacrifices, by giving charities and alms, by doing selfless service, and by doing Tapa (i.e. by observing austerity, doing penances and living a life of rigour and sufferance) without any desires, hopes, expectations and yearnings. It is the awareness or knowledge or realisation of the Atma (as a personification of Truth and as a fount of eternal bliss and felicity which is synonymous with Brahm realisation) that elevates them to a higher stature of being a 'Muni' (i.e. a person who is pious and religious; a holy man; a saint, a hermit or an ascetic).

It is for this exalted stature which bestows eternity and blissfulness that truly renunciate people renounce everything in this world and accept the path of 'Sanyas'

(which is the path of total renunciation and detachment from this mundane materialistic and perishable world of falsehoods and sorrows, and instead spending time in contemplation upon the Atma and meditation upon the pure self and the Truth). This is the reason that in ancient times, those who were self-realised, wise and learned never desired to have children or did any deed with any kind of expectation for favourable result; they were never attached to this mundane world of sense objects, and whatever they did was like an offering to the fire sacrifice, which ensured that their entire life became one big religious sacrament. They remained indifferent to their worldly activities which they did with total dispassion, thinking that the true fruit of any deed is obtaining eternal and truthful contentedness and happiness, and not that which is temporary and perishable. They had realised that what is perceived as happiness and joy in this materialistic world was actually an illusion like the presence of water in a desert mirage, and it is therefore futile wasting their energy and time pursuing it. Instead, they pursued the path leading to the ultimate Truth and Reality which would give eternal and everlasting peace, happiness and rest for their souls. They were enlightened and wise enough to realise that this world is perishable and non-eternal, and that their truthful identity is not this body but their pure conscious Atma or soul which by the way was a manifestation of the supreme Lord of this creation known as Brahm. With this erudition, they never felt the need to indulge in the false world and never felt inferior to anyone. Since the Atma is the same in all the living beings, they treated all with equanimity and equality, being full of compassion and love for everyone because each and every creature was a manifestation of Brahm in their view. They never thought themselves to be superior to others and therefore they never were arrogant, haughty, egoistic and unduly proud. Realising that Brahm, the supreme transcendental Authority of creation, is omnipresent and almighty, they desisted from anything unrighteous and inauspicious. Taken all in all, the life of such ancient people was marked by piety, humility, righteousness and auspiciousness—i.e. they were ‘Dharma’ personified.

They remained free from the three types of aspirations, ambitions, desires, yearnings, hopes and expectations that ordinary mortals are bogged down by—that pertaining to a son, that pertaining to wealth and property, and that pertaining to the world. Being freed from these fetters, they roamed around without any worries and attachments of any kind, subsisting on alms and begging for food just enough to carry their Atma in their body till its journey in this world is complete.

Attachments with the son creates attachment with money (because one wishes to provide comfort to his children, and money plays an all-important role in the comfortable maintenance of the family and its material well being), and this leads to the necessity of having some kind of favourable interaction with the world which can be conducive to the achievement of this goal (because money comes with commerce, industry or as a result of largesse from rich people, and for this a person must be social and friendly towards other people in this world, because if a man is not friendly towards others it would be difficult for him to accumulate wealth as not only would he be unsuccessful in business but he would also gather many enemies around him who would create hurdles in his financial growth).

Wise, erudite and learned people describe about the Atma using the words ‘Neti-Neti’ (i.e. not that not this), because it is something which transcends comprehension; it is beyond the grasp of intelligence and understanding. [Refer Canto 4, Brahmin 2, verse no. 4, and Canto 2, Brahmin 3, verse no. 6.]

The Atma desires no company and it is completely detached from everything; it is a perfect and dispassionate renunciate. It cannot be killed or harmed in any way.

It has no fetters shackling it to anything. It is fully free and liberated. It is without any miseries, sufferings, torments and anguish. It is imperishable, infinite and eternal. It is capable of transcending both the righteous as well as the unrighteous (i.e. it is neutral and full of equanimity) because it does not get involved in doing anything, it never gets attached to any deed, whether righteous and unrighteous, and therefore it is not affected by the consequences of these deeds (22).

23. This fact has also been endorsed by the sacred hymns called Richas of the Vedas, which say, inter alia, that this magnificent glory, exalted stature and divine virtues of those who are experts in the knowledge pertaining to Brahm, is eternal, uniform and stable. They neither rise or improve in stature, nor are they demoted or downgraded in anyway as a consequence of doing any deed, be it righteous and auspicious, or unrighteous and inauspicious respectively.

One should endeavour to become acquainted with the basic cause of that glory, stature and honour, i.e. one should acquire self-realisation and awareness of the Atma and Brahm that would give them that exalted stature. This knowledge and awareness ensures that such a person would never indulge himself in anything that is unrighteous and inauspicious¹.

A person who has become wisened to the facts and truths about the absolute Reality, which is the immutable and irrefutable Truth of creation as mentioned in this Upanishad and elsewhere, acquires a calm and serene mind; he does severe Tapa; he becomes a renunciate par excellence; he becomes dispassionate and detached from all worldly mundane affairs that act as shackles for an ordinary person; he develops the grand quality known as 'Titiksha' (which means having endurance, patience, forbearance, fortitude and sufferance); and he becomes focused, contemplative and introspective in his mind. He sees the world as nothing else but an image of his own Atma, he realises too that his own true 'self' is none other than that Atma which uniformly pervades everywhere, and therefore his own bosom is the habitat of the world².

Then no unrighteousness, perversion, sins, evils and wickedness can ever affect him; he goes beyond their reach. Such a person become free from all taints and blemishes; he remains sinless and faultless; he has no doubts, confusions and perplexities in his mind. He becomes a true Brahmin³.

Oh king! This state of existence is known as 'Brahm Loka', literally the abode where the supreme, transcendental and majestic Brahm lives. Here it refers to a Brahmin or any other person who has attained that exalted stature which has been described in the forgoing verses, which makes that man as exalted, as praise worthy and as noble and honourable as Brahm himself. Such a person becomes a personification of Brahm. Such a person has realised the true meaning of what constitutes Brahm. You have arrived here in Brahm Loka--i.e. you have realised Brahm, and therefore you have arrived in the realm of Brahm; you have come to know the Truth⁴!

King Janak was overwhelmed with gratitude. He said in thanks giving, 'Oh Lord! I bow before you most humbly and reverentially. I submit myself before you and present myself at your service' (23).

[Note—¹When a man becomes aware of who he actually is, i.e. when he becomes aware that he has a noble and high pedigree, that he is the pure conscious Atma living inside the gross body, that he is already an exalted being in the evolutionary ladder and is just one step away from being finally and eternally freed from the shackle of delusions and ignorance that had been the cause of his endless cycle of birth and death resulting

in perpetual sorrows and miseries for him, he would not do anything then that would be demeaning and demoting to his exalted stature, and which would cause an obstacle in the path of his final liberation and deliverance. After all, who would voluntarily wish to be demoted from an already high stature? Who would court troubles and miseries unnecessarily? When one becomes aware of the fundamental 'truth', one does not get involved in any unrighteous, unholy, unscrupulous, depraved and denigrating deed because, as stated in the previous verse no. 22, a profound sense of renunciation, detachment and dispassion would sprout in the heart of a self-realised and enlightened person towards this world of falsehood and material comforts which are perishable and non-eternal.

²That is, as pointed out earlier, since he has realised that his Atma and the Atma of the other living creature in this world are one and the same entity, he comes to terms with the fact that the entire world resides in his own bosom where his Atma resides.

³That is, a person who has inculcated these noble qualities in him becomes truly worthy of respect and honour, he becomes truly exalted and enlightened, he becomes worthy of being called a Brahmin who is the senior most member of the society and respected for his erudition, scholarship, wisdom and knowledge, who acts as a guide and teacher for the rest of the society, and who treats everyone with compassion and likeness, because he has realised the true essence of Brahm.

⁴When an enlightened person realises that the supreme Brahm lives in his own bosom as his pure conscious Atma, he understands that 'Brahm Loka' is inside him. Similarly, since this entire world around him is a manifestation of Brahm, it obviously becomes a 'Brahm Loka'. If he is truly Brahm-realised, he would immediately deduce that both these two Brahm Lokas are fundamentally the same—a non-dual view of creation.]

24. This great, majestic, magnificent and supreme Atma is the one which does not take birth, is the one entity that eats and digests food, and is the authority that gives rewards or punishments for the deeds done by a creature/person. A wise person who knows this Atma in the way described above is deemed to have successfully acquired the fruitful rewards of all deeds done by him (24).

[Note--This is because the ultimate aim of doing various auspicious deeds is to obtain some kind of comfort, happiness, joy and peace. Worldly happiness and peace which are limited to the body have no substance and permanence; it is the realisation of the absolute 'truth' about the actual 'reality' that gives a man permanent peace in this life, because the entity which is 'realised' is imperishable and eternal, and consequently the peace and bliss are also imperishable and eternal.

The Atma lives in the body that takes a birth. This happens because the creature had erroneously thought in its earlier body that the body in which it lived then was its true self instead of the Atma. This basic misconception led it to fall prey to the trap in which it got mentally and emotionally involved in the various deeds done by that body. Since every action has a reaction, the deeds also created their respective results which had to be borne by the 'doer' of those deeds. No one else suffers for the crime committed by an individual; he has to suffer the punishment himself. Likewise, when the Atma of the creature accepted that it had done deeds and therefore got entangled in them by voluntarily becoming their 'doer', it had to suffer from the consequences of those deeds. It had therefore to take a body to live out the results of those deeds. Further, when the creature was deluded into believing that the world was real, it developed numerous desires and yearnings pertaining to its materialistic comforts and pleasures, and not all were successfully accomplished by it. So the creature assumed another body to complete its unfinished tasks or enjoy the world which it could not

fully do in its previous birth. The Atma unwillingly becomes a part of this vicious game because it is the truthful identity of the creature. So, when realisation dawns upon the living being who it actually is, it distances itself from this world and the trap of falsehood so that it does not have to repeat the mistake of its previous life and come back again to suffer in this deluding world. This is the beneficial effect of self-realisation.

While residing in the body, the Atma of the creature does many deeds and eats food because the body does many deeds and eats food. But the realised and enlightened view is that this body is perishable and has taken a birth, while the Atma is imperishable and eternal and it neither takes a birth nor dies. Therefore, there is a difference between the entity that eats and does deeds but dies and the entity that eats and does deeds but does not die! Herein lies the great secret of liberation and self-realisation—contemplation and meditation and research reveals that the former is the perishable gross body which is the temporary habitat and identity of the creature, but its actual habitat and truthful identity is the Atma and not the body.

Therefore, it is the Atma residing in the body that actually empowers the body to eat, drink and do deeds, and therefore the food eaten, the liquid drunk and deed done are all meant for this Atma and not the body. Since the Atma is a personification of Brahm, who is the supreme authority in creation, it is the Brahm that awards the man for his good deeds and punishes him for his bad ones.

When this astounding awareness enlightens the inner self of the creature, it is deemed that it has done all the deeds—i.e. it has found complete contentedness and absolute fulfillment obtained by doing all deeds completely and successfully so much so that nothing more is left to be done.]

25. This supreme Atma is unborn and eternal; it does not become old and decrepit; it does not decay or die; it is a fount of bliss and eternity, called Amrit; it is fearless and without any consternations and perplexities. That which is fearless is indeed Brahm. A person who knows this becomes one like the fearless Brahm!’ (25).

[Note--The last verse shows how one can become fearless once he realises that the world is an image of his own Atma, and therefore he would have no enemy from whom to fear. He will have no ill-will against anybody, and he roams around freely, spreading love and compassion liberally for all. Naturally, such a man would be loved, honoured and respected by all, he would be welcomed everywhere, and naturally he would have no fear from any quarter. That is why ancient sages could live in dense forests amidst wild animals fearlessly because these animals had nothing to fear from them. In fact, the divine halo effusing from the holy bodies of these sages and seers glowed like a burning fire and it helped to keep the animals at bay.]

Canto 4, Brahmin 5

[This section contains the dialogue between Maitreyi and sage Yagyavalkya in which the sage preaches his wife the great truths about the Atma before he took to Sanyas, i.e. the life of a reclusive hermit. This Brahmin is almost identical to Canto 2, Brahmin 4. It enunciates profound metaphysical truth about the pure conscious Atma and the supreme transcendental Brahm in a succinct way.

1. It is well known that sage Yagyavalkya had two wives—the elder one was named Katyayani, and the younger was Maitreyi. Out of the two, Maitreyi was enlightened and knowledgeable about the truth of Brahm, the absolute Reality of creation and the

ultimate Truth, while the other wife was like an ordinary housekeeper. Yagyavalkya wished to step into the next phase of life called Vanprastha by renouncing his householder's obligations and henceforth lead a lonely life of a monk or a wandering friar, known as the life of a Sanyasi (1).

2. Sage Yagyavalkya said to his wife Maitreyi, 'Oh Maitreyi! I want to rise above my present state of existence (i.e. I wish to leave my householder phase of life and take the vows of Sanyas; that is, I wish to spend the rest of my life as a renunciate ascetic, a friar or a reclusive monk or a hermit). Therefore, I wish to partition or distribute whatever material wealth that I have as a householder between you and my second wife Katyayani' (2).

3. Maitreyi enquired, 'Oh Lord! Even if I become the owner of all the riches and material comforts and wealth of this earth, will I get immortality? Will I get to drink the ambrosia of eternal peace, bliss and happiness?'

Yagyavalkya replied, 'No, no! Your life will be like that of people who are rich and well off. But you should not expect immortality by worldly riches. You cannot expect to drink that ambrosia which gives eternal peace, bliss and happiness by any of the material things of this perishable world' (3).

4. Maitreyi said, 'What will I do with that wealth which does not give immortality and provide me with the ambrosia called Amrit that bestows eternity and supreme bliss; what will I do with that worldly wealth that does not give eternal peace and everlasting happiness? Oh Lord! If you know of some way by which this ambrosia (Amrit) can be made available to me (or can be accessed by me), then please do tell me (or preach me) about it (instead of giving me worldly riches)' (4).

5. Yagyavalkya replied, 'Oh beloved! You are very dear to me, and speak words that please me. Come and sit. I shall preach you about that essential ambrosia of which you are so eager to know about. You should then follow my instructions' (5).

6. [Refer Canto 2, Brahman 4, verse no. 5 in the context of the present verse because they are very similar.]

Sage Yagyavalkya then began to preach his wife Maitreyi—'Certainly a 'wife' loves a her husband not for the sake of his prospective pleasure and satisfaction, or for his own sake and welfare, or to fulfill his hopes, expectations, aspirations and desires that he might have, but to satisfy her own self interest.

Similarly, a 'husband' loves his wife for his own sake, and not for her sake or with the objective of satisfying the various hopes and aspirations of the wife and providing her the pleasure and comfort of being cared for and loved.

This situation can be extended to all the persons with whom a person interacts in this world. For example, a 'son' is dear to his father not for the son's own sake, but for the self-interest of the father.

'Wealth' is not dear to a man to enhance the value and importance of the wealth, but because it gives the man worldly comfort, pleasure, prestige and honour.

'Animals' are not dear to anyone just because they are living beings, but because they serve humans, they are of utility to humans, they make life easier for humans¹.

‘Brahmins’ (learned and wise elderly people) are not dear to a man for their own sake, but because they serve the self-interest of the man.

A ‘Kshatriya’ likes to acquire strength, valour, authority and powers to enhance his own value, his own abilities and serve his own interest rather than to honour the virtue of ‘Shakti’ for its own sake.

The ‘world’ and its things are dear to a man because they serve his vested interest, and not because he wishes to serve the world selflessly. A person loves ‘another person’, or for that matter any living being or creature because he gets some benefit from the latter, because some of his interests are served by that living being, and not because the person loves all and everyone in a dispassionate way, for had it been so he would also have loved his enemy.

The ‘Gods’ are dear and honoured because they serve the self-interest of a person, and not because they are exalted, honourable and venerable beings who are divine and have supernatural powers.

The Vedas are respected because they serve the interest of a man, and not for their own sake².

In fact, all the creatures are dear to anyone because in some way or the other they serve a person’s personal interest.

In short it can be said that anything or anyone is dear to another, or one pays any attention to them simply because they serve his self-interest, are of any use to him one way or the other. No one would pay any heed to the other if the latter is of no utility to the former.

So, oh dear Maitreyi, it is only the pure conscious Atma or soul that is worthy of being seen as a holy and divine entity, called having its divine Darshan, is worthy of hearing about, called its Sravan, and is worthy of contemplation, meditation, experiencing and witnessing, called its Matya (because it is a selfless and sincere companion). And all this is possible by having a truthful and analytical knowledge of it, called Atma’s Vigyan.

By knowing this Atma, one knows all that is worth knowing¹² (6).

[Note--¹All *animals/livestock* are dear to a man because he has something to gain from them, and not because he likes to serve them for their own sake, or because the animal is a living being and therefore deserves the same compassion and kindness that a man shows to his near and dear ones. For example, when cattle begin to become old and unproductive, the farmer decides to get rid of them. Even though a man might love his pet dog dearly, but when the same dog begins to create nuisance for him in any manner, or when it gets old, the man puts him to sleep.

²The *Vedas* are respected because they serve the interests of a man, and not for their own sake. The Vedas are treasuries of knowledge; their Mantras are used in religious practices; from the Vedas evolved the various philosophies and schools of thought which improve the mental and intellectual standing of a man. If the Vedas had been of no good for the man, he wouldn’t have bothered to even read them, what to talk of learning them and revering them.]

7. Those who think that Brahm, in all its various manifestations, resides in anything other than the Atma are forsaken by all. [That is, such ignorant persons are not shown any respect in the society. They are avoided by all, and treated as fools.]

For example, those who regard Brahmins (learned and wise men who are considered as Gyan or truthful knowledge personified) as being distinct and separate from the Atma are forsaken by the Brahmins¹.

Those who regard Kshatriyas (the warrior class who personify the qualities of power, authority, courage, stamina, strength and valour etc.)

as being distinct and separate from the Atma are abandoned by the Kshatriyas². Similarly, those who regard the Lokas (the different world, such as the household, the business world, the world of friends etc.) as being different and separate from the Atma are forsaken by them³.

Those who regard the Gods as having a separate and distinct existence from the Atma (or from the supreme Brahm whose image the Atma is) would be abandoned and forsaken by the Gods⁴.

If he sees the Vedas as having a distinct existence from his Atma, the Vedas also forsake him⁵.

Those who see the various 'Bhuts' (creatures) as being different and separate from the Atma are forsaken by the latter⁶.

That is, all the spiritual knowledge that is embodied in the person of the Brahmin, all the qualities of strength, vitality and potentials that are represented by the Kshatriyas, the entire creation represented by the various Lokas (the worlds), all the divine qualities and noble virtues in creation represented by the exalted Gods, and the great virtues of humility and service which are represented by the humble and ordinary creatures (Bhuts) of this creation—all of them forsake a stupid person who ignorantly and foolishly sees anything else except the Atma in all of them. In other words, there is nothing here that is not Atma⁷ (7).

[Note—¹He who treats *Brahm* (the transcendental supreme Authority of creation which is the absolute and irrefutable Truth and Reality) and the virtues of *Gyan* (knowledge) as being distinct and separate from the Atma (the pure conscious soul), both Brahm and Gyan forsake him. Such people are denied the benefit of enlightened advice and moral guidance that learned *Brahmins* who personify both Brahm as well as Gyan give to the people; such people are swamped by ignorance and delusions.

²In a similar vein, if one treats the *Kshatriya*, the strong, powerful and authoritative ruling class in society representing the virtues of strength, valour, power, authority, stamina and potentials (collectively called *Bal*—बल), as having a separate and distinct identity from the Atma, then the Kshatriyas, or the virtues of strength, valour, potentials authority and majesty that they represent, also forsakes such as person. That is, strength and valour elude them; they lack courage and stamina to face adversities. They fear unnecessarily from the world because they lack self confidence that is the hallmark of the omnipotent Atma.

³Likewise, a person who sees the *Lokas*, i.e. the different worlds and their inhabitant creatures as being different from the Atma, is abandoned by the Lokas. This is because he would invariably have some degree of the sense of jealousy, envy, insecurity and competition with others; this would cause heartburn and fears which in their wake snatch his peace and tranquility. Such a man who thinks that the other person is his competitor does not treat him with the equanimity, love, compassion and fortitude that is displayed by a person who treats everyone as his brother and compatriot because he knows that the Atma in him and in the other person is the same entity.

⁴Similarly, if he sees the *Gods* other than in the form of his Atma, they also abandon him because they regard him as haughty, egoistic, proud and arrogant; such people are considered by the Gods as fallen from the holy path marked by piety and humility as well as characterised by truthful knowledge, self-realisation, enlightenment and profound wisdom and erudition. That is, the Gods who represent the various forces of Nature and the different divine qualities and faculties present in the man himself, would refuse to obey and oblige

him. In other words, he would lose his natural command over the sense organs in which the primary Gods are said to have their residence.

⁵If he sees the *Vedas* as having a distinct existence from his Atma, the Vedas also forsake him because he has not understood the tenets and fundamental principal teaching of the Vedas and defame the holy name of the scriptures by pretending to be an expert in the holy scriptures. People think that a person who has studied the Vedas exemplifies their tenets, and they look up to him for guidance and as an example to emulate. If he has not imbibed their teaching in spirit, then he sets a bad example for the society, and therefore the Vedas distance themselves from such a vile man who defames and defiles them.

⁶Similarly, if he treats all the living *creatures* of this creation as being different and distinct from his own Atma, or his pure self, such a person is also forsaken by these creatures. This is because he would distinguish between them and this would cause ill-will and jealousy amongst them. The consequence is that those whom he shows less favour would abandon him in favour of a person who gives them their due respect and place in society.

⁷In this simple way we conclude that all the entities— Brahmin representing Gyan (knowledge), Kshatriyas representing Bal (strength and valour, power and authority), the Lokas represented by their creatures, the Gods represented by their glorious and divine virtues, potentials and majesty and authority—are components of this creation, and are one or the other form of the same entity known as the Atma. There is indeed nothing besides the Atma.

This is the *non-dual* approach propounded and expounded by the Upanishads. Whatever that exists consists basically of one fundamental unit known as the Atma. It is at the core of everything that exists. All dichotomies and schisms that exist are due to the ignorance about this one basic fact. This ignorance leads to the conception of duality, such as the concept of ‘you’ and ‘me’. This misconception of the reality is at the root cause of all sought of agitations and restlessness in the mind of a man. This ‘not dual’ approach about creation also leads to eternal peace and tranquility for the soul; it enhances self confidence and well being in a man because then he has no enemies, no opponents, no contenders, and no competitors against whom he has to struggle. It helps to overcome all causes of hatred, animosity, jealousy and other such negative emotions that cloud a man’s mental radar, thereby eclipsing his peace, happiness and bliss.

‘Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in you?’ (Holy Bible, Corinthians, 1/3/8.); ‘I will dwell in them and walk with them’ (Holy Bible, Corinthians, 11/6/16.); ‘We are (all) the children of God’ (Holy Bible, Romans, 8/16.); ‘If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another’. (Holy Bible, John, 1/4/11.)]

8. [In the following verses, the example of the kettledrum, the conch and Indian lute is taken to highlight the fact that the Atma can be realised by the person himself and not by any other person on his behalf.]

It is not possible for any ordinary man to grasp (understand or stop) the sound emanating and radiating out from a kettledrum when it is beaten (by a stick)—for it is only the player of the drum who can grasp it (i.e. understand the finer tunes or notes of this form of music or sound emanating from the instrument, and stop them if he so wishes), or it is the kettledrum itself which can do it (i.e. it is this instrument which has this natural quality to produce that sound when it is beaten, and therefore it is the one that can stop it if it decides to do so by becoming out of tune or getting broken)¹ (8).

[Note—¹The *sound* emanating from the *kettledrum* can be stopped by the player when he stops to beat the drum. No one else other than the player of the musical instrument known as the kettledrum is able to stop the sound of music emanating from that instrument when it is struck, because that sound or music can be stopped when the musician decides to do so. Since sound cannot be physically caught hold of by anyone, the only method to stop that sound is to stop beating the kettledrum. Only the musicians can do so. Therefore, the sound emanating from the kettledrum can be stopped only by the musician when he stops beating it, and not by anyone in the audience.

It can also be stopped by the kettledrum itself such as the case when it gets broken for example.

Similarly, the pure consciousness and divine qualities of the Atma can be realised by the man when he himself endeavours to do so. The Atma can be understood and witnessed by contemplation and meditation on it by the person himself. Once enlightenment dawns in him, the light of pure consciousness shines through his entire being. No external aid is needed for it. A person can understand or grasp the Atma or the pure consciousness that it symbolises by being conscious, aware and enlightened about it; by focusing one's attention and energy in unraveling it, realizing it and deciphering it.

Here the 'kettledrum' is likened to the Atma; the pure consciousness emanating and radiating out from the Atma is the 'sound of music' coming out from the kettledrum; concentration, meditation and contemplation upon that Atma to unravel the pure consciousness emanating or effusing out from it and radiating in all the directions is like the beating of the kettledrum by the player; the aspirant who contemplates and meditates upon the Atma is like the player of the drum; and not paying attention to and remaining unaware of the super conscious energy vibrating and pulsating inside the bosom of a creature is like the person who cannot understand the meaning of the sound emanating from the kettledrum as its music and therefore unable to grasp it.

In other words, even as a musician is the only person who is able to decipher and understand the meaning of the sound coming out from the musical instrument known as the kettledrum, only a wise and enlightened person is able to experience and witness the pulsating energy of consciousness emanating from and radiating out from the Atma residing in his bosom. Just like the kettledrum in itself is inactive and produces the sound only when it is beaten by the stick, the consciousness present inside the seeker is made available to him only when he diligently endeavours to experience and witness it. If he does not try to become acquainted with the consciousness residing inside his own bosom, the latter would not make itself known to him on its own even as the sound will not come out from the kettledrum if it is not beaten by the musician though it is inherently present in its.]

9. [The allegory of a conch is used here.] Similarly, the sound emanating from the conch when it is blown can be grasped (understood or stopped) by either the blower of that conch or by the conch itself, and by no one else¹ (9).

[Note—¹The sound of the conch can be stopped by the blower of the conch when he stops blowing air into it, and by no one else. That is, the only way to stop the conch from producing the sound is to stop blowing air into it, and this can be done by the person who is blowing the conch. If another person attempts to physically stop the sound emanating from the conch, he will not be able to

stop it, no matter how much he tries, except to request the conch blower to stop blowing air into it.

Similarly, only an expert blower knows what a particular type of sound coming from the conch means, as in olden days this was used to send coded signals during wars or between guards who guarded the gates of forts. In the same manner, the Atma can be grasped—understood and realised, its stupendous energy harnessed and cultivated—only by sincere effort undertaken by the seeker himself and by no other means.]

The other way to stop that sound is when the conch gets broken or fractured. In other words, it can be stopped by the conch itself.

The meaning and implication of this verse is the same as that which is applicable to the kettledrum in verse no. 8 above.]

10. [The allegory of an Indian lute is used here.] Similarly, the music or sound emanating from an Indian lute is grasped (understood or stopped) by the player of that instrument or by the instrument itself, and by no body else (10).

[Note--¹The sound in the form of music that is emanating from the lute is comprehended by the player of the instrument and not by any other person not well versed in music, and it can also be stopped when the player decides to do so and by no one else. Similarly, the sound of music is stopped if the lute gets broken or gets out of tune. In the same manner, the pure consciousness of the Atma can be realised by a sincere aspirant himself by his own diligent efforts and not by any other external means.

In other words, when an Indian lute is being played, its sound or music can be stopped, or literally caught from proceeding ahead, by the player of the lute if he stops playing the instrument, or by the lute itself if any of its parts gets broken, or if it gets out of tune. No other person can 'hold' its sound from either emanating from it or spreading out from it.

The meaning and implication of this verse is the same as that which is applicable to the kettledrum or the conch in verse nos. 8 & 9 above.]

11. Oh Maitreyi! Just like wet firewood produces smoke which covers it from all the sides and spreads out from it in all the directions, the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sam Veda, the Atharva Veda, the Itihases and Purans (i.e. mythological ancient histories of the Hindus) the Upanishads (i.e. Vedanta), the Sutras (i.e. keys or formulas used to understand the scriptures; their tenets and maxims), the Shlokas (i.e. the hymns, verses and stanzas of the scriptures), the different narratives, description of Mantras, religious rituals, the fire sacrifices, that which is eaten or offered to the Gods and the sacred fire, that which is drunk as well as offered to the Gods, this world (which is mortal), the other world (the world after death; the immortal world), all the living beings and the elements of creation called Bhuts—all of them are like a breath of that supreme, transcendental and majestic Authority (11).

12. The ocean is the final resting place for all forms of water, no matter from where they come and what shape they take (whether that water comes from a glacier, from rain, a river, a lake, a pond, a well etc.)¹, the skin is the receptacle of all the senses of touch (for one cannot feel anything without touching it, and the perception of touch is located in the skin), the nose for the perception of smell, the tongue for the perception of taste, the eye for the perception of sight (and the different visions it produces), and

the ears for the perception of hearing. Similarly, the mind is the crucible where all Sankalps (determinations, volitions, ambitions, aspiration, vows and promises) originate and find their resting place, while the heart is where all knowledge is stored (and that is why we say that we 'learn anything by heart', and not by mind). The hands are the organs on which all deeds depend (because we use our hand to do anything); the genitals are the centre for all sensual pleasures; the anus is the centre for all excretions (because all the unwanted residual matters of the body are expelled through that opening in the form of the stool); all paths depend upon the legs (because it is the leg that can carry or take a man from one place to another); and the faculty of speech, called the 'Vaak Shakti' (or the powers and ability to speak articulately) is the foundation upon which all the Vedas are based (because the Vedas or any other ancient scriptures have been traditionally passed on from teacher to disciple by the verbal mode)² (12).

[Note--¹Rivers, streams, seas and underground water—ultimately all fall and merge with the vast reservoir of water known as the *ocean*, and then become one with it. The ocean is the primary source of water because its water evaporates during the day under the sunlight to form the clouds which fall down back upon the earth in the form of rain which in turn supplies water to the soil replenishing underground water channels as well as feeding the rivers and the streams on earth. These, together with melted water from the glaciers, finally open into the ocean, thereby completing the cycle.

In terms of metaphysics, this is the circuit the Atma follows. It is from Brahm, which is like the ocean, that the Atma, which is like the water, has originated, then gone to take a dwelling as the Gods in the heavens, who can be compared to the clouds, then taking up residence in a body of the creature here on earth much like the rain falling down upon the earth and taking up its residence in the different water bodies here, and finally dying and reverting back to its primary source, the Brahm, which is like the water of the river etc. falling back into the ocean.

²The glorious knowledge of the *Vedas* depend upon speech, because in ancient times the Vedas were learnt, chanted, repeated and transmitted orally from one generation to another, and the faculty of speech was an integral and most essential instrument to serve this purpose. In later part of history, the Vedas got written down as texts but still their knowledge necessitated the use of the faculty of speech because their hymns or Mantras had to be chanted and recited aloud with a particular incantation system typical to them in order to make them effective.

In other words, teaching of any knowledge needs this faculty of speech as well as well as the proper use of words and a pleasant voice so that the disciple is not put off by the boredom of the entire exercise. So the Vedas representing knowledge depend or rely upon speech to become effective and be of any benefit for the society.]

13. Even as a lump of salt is uniformly salty both from within and from without, this Atma is also a uniform and homogenous entity from within and without; it is without any notion of having an inside and an outside.

The Atma is one single, uniform, consistent, immutable, indivisible and wholesome entity. It is therefore devoid of any kind of distinctions or differentiating attributes or characteristics.

It is an embodiment, a treasury and a fount of pure consciousness. That pristine, transcendental and pure conscious Atma rises above the mundane considerations pertaining to the different Bhuts (the mortal creatures of this creation).

That is, though it lives in the gross body of the creature consisting of the primary elements of Nature called the Bhuts (i.e. the elements earth, water, fire, air and sky), at the time of dissolution, i.e. at the time when the mortal body of the creature decays and breaks up into its ingredients, this Atma also appears to die and dissolve into these elements and vanishes with them by becoming one with and indistinguishable from them. After death, there is no trace of that essential entity, known as the Atma, because it leaves the body made up of the five elementary Bhuts—the earth, water, fire, wind and space—which was its temporary habitat and due to which it had been falsely implicated with having so many different attributes and characteristics. It becomes free from the attributes and characteristic qualities that had been used to define it as long as it had resided in the body consisting of the different organs and their characteristic features. As a result, the Atma rises above the limits of ‘individualism’ to become ‘universal’

This is what sage Yagyavalkya said to his wife Maitreyi (13).

[Note--When the Atma was present in the body, it had acquired the attributes of the body, though in its true, pure and pristine form it had no such thing as having any kind of attribute. The Atma is also synonymous with Pran which refers to the vital wind/air element present in the body. Pran also refers to the vital spark of life present inside the body of a living creature without which the body would be dead. Now, when a man dies, this Pran comes out of the body and escapes into the open sky to merge with its primary form, the wind/air element. Wind or air has no specific form or any kind of specific attributes, but it is nevertheless universally present wherever the sky is present. Further, the air element takes the forms that the sky takes—that is, it takes the shape of the container in which the sky is present. Similarly, this Atma becomes universal, all-pervading and omnipresent just like the sky or the wind/air element. It was out of ignorance that it was identified with the body having the sense organs. In fact, the Atma is independent of the body just like the wind/air element is independent of the container in which the sky is located.

For example, if we take an empty pitcher, the sky as well as the air element is present inside the body of the pitcher as well as the outside of it. If this allegory is extended to the body of the creature, the skin becomes the body of the pitcher, and the air element present inside the body becomes the air element inside the pitcher. When the pitcher is broken, this boundary between the air present inside and outside of it is removed, and both the air elements which have been hitherto defined as the air present inside the pitcher and the air present outside the pitcher, become one and indistinguishable from one another. Similarly, when the man dies, the body is cremated which is a metaphor for saying that the boundary between the vital air or wind element present inside the body and the one present outside the body is removed, and hence both these air elements—the one inside and the one outside—merge with each other, leaving no distinction between the two. This knowledge, this perception and conviction is known as enlightenment. It helps to reveal a person's true identity. He realises that his body is not his real self, but the Atma, which is one of the forms that the air element takes, is eternal because it lives even after the body is dead.

Besides the air and sky elements, the other elements also separate from one another when the body dies and is cremated—i.e. the earth element merges with the earth, the fire element present in the body reverts back into the universal energy present latently in the entire creation, and the water element of the body evaporates into the moisture of the atmosphere. Say, when this happens, what is left behind? Obviously nothing! This is how the Atma remains invisible, intangible and intractable while it lived inside the body as well as after the death of the body.

But while the Atma still lives in the body consisting of the five basic elements of creation—viz. sky, wind, fire, water and earth, it exhibits all the

characteristic features that are the result of a combined effect of the individual characteristics of these elements. Therefore, though the Atma is basically infinite and eternal, attributeless and unqualified, having no individual character that can be defined and classified, but when it takes up residence in the body of the creature it becomes indistinguishable from it and assumes the characters and attributes of the individual creature so much so that ignorant people think that the Atma is the physical body of the creature. When the body dies, this Atma is released from it and then no trace of it is left behind.

From the metaphysical point of view, this state can be achieved even while the man is alive—it happens when he becomes enlightened about his true self and detaches himself from getting emotionally and mentally involved in this world and abstains from gratifying his body and its sense organs. It is then that the Atma is released from its burden of ignorance and delusions which prevents it from realising its true self. Once enlightenment comes, freedom is a natural corollary.

Taking the example of the *salt* which could actually be ‘seen’ and ‘felt’ before it dissolves in water, this majestic and supreme *Atma* can also be experienced, witnessed, perceived and literally observed by experience while it is still inside the body of the creature by proper wisdom and erudition. But once the salt dissolves in the water, it spreads uniformly and homogenously in the whole body of that water, and then it is impossible to physically ‘see’ and ‘feel’ it separately. It can then only be experienced as the perception of ‘saltiness’ when that water is drunk.

Similarly, the universal pure consciousness Atma, when it takes up residence in the creature’s physical body, becomes inseparable and indistinguishable from it, and therefore cannot be independently observed. But even as the presence of salt in water is ascertained when one tastes it personally and not by merely being told about it, i.e. only when one experiences its salty taste himself is he convinced about the salt being there, the presence of the conscious Atma inside the bosom can be ascertained only by personal experience and not by being taught by others or by reading voluminous scriptures. In fact, this is called ‘Jivan Mukti’ or being liberated from the fetters of ignorance while one is still alive. Then, at the time of death, the body is naturally discarded and the Atma is physically liberated from the limitations of the physical gross body, and it merges with the cosmic Atma in the form of the transcendental Soul that is ever present everywhere. This form of liberation is called ‘Videha Mukti’ or the actual deliverance from the shackles and limitations and boundaries of the physical body.

When the body dies, or when the Atma gives up its notion of having a body, it finds freedom from the fetters that had been shackling it to the gross body consisting of the elements. It rises higher and gets detached from this body made of the various sense organs. At that time it has no attributes, no definitions, no designations and no specific signs that can be assigned to it, and neither does it have any name. This is because it merges with the wind/air element and the sky element present outside the body after discarding the fetters of the body and coalesces with these primary elements to become one with and indistinguishable from them. It is only the body that has a name, any attributes, any specific designation and stature by which a person is recognised in this world, and shows any signs that it is alive or not. The Atma is already super conscious and it does not need any certificates from anybody to vouch for its supremacy.

Once the fetter or limitation or boundary of the body is removed at the time of death, the Atma in the form of the vital life conscious factor

called ‘Pran’ leaves the body and coalesces with the all-pervading wind/air outside just like the air inside a mud pot imperceptibly and without any fuss escapes from it and merges with the air outside the pot when the pot is broken.

This Atma is called the ‘*spirit*’ because it is the essence of all that exists in this living creation.]

14. Maitreyi said, ‘Oh Lord! By saying that after the death of the physical body, the great and mysterious Atma loses all its physical attributes, all its designations, all specific signs that can be assigned to define and describe it, and as a result it becomes nameless and formless instead—this statement of yours has put me to great confusion and doubts; it has created perplexities and has vexed me’.

Yagyavalkya clarified, ‘Oh, no Maitreyi, I have not said anything to create confusion or perplexity in your mind, and neither is my preaching ambiguous. Rather, whatever I have said to you is to make you aware of the ‘truth and reality’ of that stupendous, majestic, most mysterious and strange supreme Authority which is beyond comprehension of an ordinary person. Oh dear, it is sufficient to enlighten one about the holistic and sublime knowledge which pertains to that supreme transcendental Authority.

Verily, this Atma is definitely eternal, imperishable and immortal; it does not decay, decompose and get to ruin; it is immutable and indivisible’ (14).

[Note--Please refer to verse no. 13 above and its note for elaboration as to why the sage was so sure that what he has taught his wife is the definitive knowledge of the Atma and there is no confusion or any scope of doubt in it. See also Brahmin 3, verse no. 6 of Canto 2. It says in its concluding part that ‘Neti-neti’—that is ‘not this, not that’—is the best definition of Brahm because there is nothing in this creation with which it can be compared; there are no words that can define it in its entirety. As it is said ‘the proof of the taste of the pudding is in its eating’, the only way to prove the truthfulness of these statements is to experience the Atma by means of contemplation and meditation, by research and deep insight. This concept of ‘Neti-Neti’ to describe the Atma has been a constant refrain in the Upanishads. Refer also to Canto 4, Brahmin 2, verse no. 4; and Canto 4, Brahmin 4, verse no. 22.

Brahmin 4, verse no. 6 of this canto describes that all that exist in any form whatsoever in this creation is nothing else but Brahm manifested in these forms. Verse no. 12 gives the classical example of salt dissolving in water which basically stresses that when we drink salty water we realise that salt is present in it, but those who have not drunk it would not believe when they are told that the water contains salt in it because they have the knowledge of water only from what they have read about it from text books. Similarly, Atma can only be experienced personally and not realised by hearing about it or reading about it in books.

Yagyavalkya tries to explain to his wife the essential and mystical nature of Brahm. It is a combination of the most incredulous of opposites. And there is no wonder in this paradox—because if Brahm has created everything, if he has injected himself subtly in all his creation as its Atma in order to remain the Lord and master of his own creation by enabling himself to control it from within, if he is the all-pervading and omnipresent Authority, then he has to be present in the good as well as the bad forms of creation, in the invisible as well as the visible forms of creation, in the cold as well as the hot, or the habitable as well as the

inhabitable forms of creation. Brahmin 2 of this canto is sufficient to remove all doubts that might arise in the mind about Brahm.

The significant point to note here is that if doubts can arise in the mind of the wife of such an exalted sage as Yagyavalkya even after living with him all her life and even after being taught by the sage himself, then it is no surprise and wonder that ordinary people are so deluded and ignorant. The wise sage advises his wife to stop getting confused and having useless doubts.]

15. When due to ignorance there is a sense of duality, called the Dwaitya philosophy, when one entity smells another entity, one sees another, one hears another, one speaks to another, one remembers another, and one knows the other. But, on the other hand, when everything is viewed in its essential and fundamental form as the Atma, an approach called 'non-duality' belonging to the Advaitya philosophy, then who smells whom, who sees whom, who hears whom, who addresses whom, and who remembers or knows whom¹!

Oh Maitreyi! 'That' by which other entities are known, say how can one know or ascertain 'that'? 'That' by which all others are known or understood, by which medium can 'that' be understood or known²? [That is, what litmus test can be applied to prove the truth about the 'Truth' itself? How can one use the torch to search for the Sun? How can one prove the virtues of testing the purity of gold that a touchstone possesses by verifying it with another touchstone?]

Therefore, oh Maitreyi, how can a 'Vigyata' (the omniscient, all-knowing Being; one who knows everything; the perfect yardstick of knowledge by which other things are judged and ascertained) be understood or known by any other lesser entity³?

Verily, Atma is beyond grasp and comprehension. It is described by the words 'Neti-neti', meaning that it is neither this nor that, it neither fits this definition nor conforms to that!

The Atma is 'Ashirya', i.e. it is imperishable. The Atma is 'Ashang', i.e. it has no company; it is unique and not attached to anything; it is dispassionate towards, detached from and indifferent to everything. It is 'Aseet', i.e. it never gets tormented or anguished; it never loses its peace, tranquility and equanimity; it never decays or gets demoted. That which is well known and omniscient, say how can one 'not' know it; or how can one make it known to oneself?

Oh Maitreyi! This knowledge is sufficient to inculcate the profoundest and most pristine of wisdom which is akin to accessing the essence of all nectar, called Amrit, which is the ambrosia of eternal beatitude and felicity which gives eternal life and everlasting peace to the creature.'

With this, Yagyavalkya concluded his preaching and went away from his household to become a renunciate ascetic who would lead the rest of his life alone, with total detachment from either his family or any other affairs of the world (15).

[Note—The concept has already been described in note to verse no. 14 above.

¹This concept of non-duality is a constant refrain in the Upanishads. The ideas expressed here have already been stressed by Yagyavalkya earlier in verse no. 7.

Under the deluding effects of ignorance, the creature has a false notion of 'duality' —it sees the 'other' creature, it smells some 'other' thing, it tastes 'something', it addresses or welcome someone 'else', it hears 'them', it thinks about

‘them’, it touches ‘them’, and it become aware of ‘those’ things or gets acquainted with ‘them’ or ‘those things’.

But in the eventuality this misconception of duality is erased and the truth of ‘non-dual reality’ emerges, who will see whom, who will smell what, taste what, addressed or welcome whom, hear whom, think about whom, touch whom, and get acquainted with whom? There is no ‘second entity’ other than the Atma which is one and immutable, so there is no question of there being another ‘entity, whether it is a creature or a mattering thing, other than one’s own Atma for whom these perceptions apply. That is, since the Atma is the only universal entity present in this creation, assuming different forms just like the sky or the air element assuming different shapes according to the container in which they are located, the entire creation is but a different form of the same Atma. The Atma is the true self of the creature and this Atma is also the true self of the creature in front of the first creature. Therefore, since the ‘true self’ are the same in both these entities, they are primarily one and the same just like any to bodies of water, say for example water in a glass tumbler and a mud pot, are the same because the molecules of water in both these two samples are the same.

²To illustrate this point, let’s take an example of the wind/air element which is called the Pran and which is the nearest analogue of Brahm and one of its manifestations because it symbolises life and vitality. This air or Pran has a set of characteristics, but do these define Brahm in its entirety? The answer is an emphatic ‘no’. Meanwhile, if we know the characteristics of Brahm, we become aware of all the characteristics which are specifically possessed by the wind/air element and exhibited by Pran simply because the latter is one of the manifestations of the former. Since the wind/air element is present throughout the world in more or less equal intensity and quantity, we would conclude that we are aware of a certain set of characteristics in the whole world which define Brahm, such as for example the ability of air to inject and sustain ‘life’ in the creature in the form of the Pran living inside it and make the body mobile. But this limited knowledge and view of the powers of the wind/air element will not give the complete picture of Brahm, because the latter has other exemplary virtues not possessed by the wind/air element.

So we can make ourselves aware of the qualities of wind/air element by analyzing the characteristics and virtues of Brahm, but how can we know the latter through the latter with the exclusive yardstick of the former.

³The touchstone is used to judge the purity of gold; it is the test of the gold’s purity. But how can gold be used as a criterion to judge the purity of the touchstone? That is, something that is complete in itself can be used as a criterion for judging or measuring others, but it is imprudent to do the other way round.

In this verse emphasis is laid on the ‘non-dual’ nature of Brahm. With this enlightened view point, everything that exists—visible or invisible, tangible or intangible, perceptible or imperceptible, comprehensible or incomprehensible—are all reduced to one, single, immutable and irrefutable ‘truth’ or essence, and that is Brahm. And this macrocosmic Brahm is synonymous with the microcosmic Atma which actually resides as pure consciousness in the individual forms that the creatures of this creation take. These creatures are the units that combine together as a mosaic to form the composite mass known as creation.

By knowing the characteristic virtues of Atma, we come to know about all things which are manifestations of that single supreme entity which the Atma represents. That is, ‘by knowing the Atma, everything is

known—both Brahm as well as Brahm's revelation in the form of this world'.]

Canto 4, Brahmin 6

1-3 Now, the chain of disciples and their teachers or Gurus who were exponents of the philosophy of Advaitya or the concept of non-duality vis-à-vis the pure consciousness Atma and the supreme transcendental Brahm as propounded, elucidated and espoused in this Canto by sage Yagyavalkya is being narrated. It starts at the bottom, i.e. at the last line of disciples, and progressively goes up till it reaches the self-produced Brahma, the creator of the rest of the world and the one who created the Vedas and the body of knowledge itself, and who is the embodiment of all this knowledge that was ever created by Brahm. This chain consisting of disciples and Gurus symbolises the encyclopedic metaphysical knowledge which is personified in the form of these persons. Therefore, the chain starts from them and ends with the patriarch of creation, Brahma, himself.

The list is as follows:- (1) Pautimashya received this Madhu Vidya from his teacher Gaupvan; (2) Gaupvan from Pautimashya; (3) Pautimashya from Gaupvan once again; (4) Gaupvan from Kaushik; (5) Kaushik from Kaundinya; (6) Kaundinya from Shandilya; (7) Shandilya from Kaushik and Gautam; (8) Gautam from Aagniveshya; (9) Aagniveshya from Shandilya and Aanvhimlaat; (10) Aanbhimlaat from (another sage or seer by the same name) Aanbhimlaat; (11) Aanvhimlaat from (a third sage or seer by the same name) Aanvhimlaat; (12) Aanvhimlaat (this third sage or seer) from Gautam; (13) Gautam from Saitav and Prachinyogya; (14) the latter two from Parasharya; (15) Parasharya from Bharadwaj; (16) Bharadwaj from (another sage named) Bharadwaj and Gautam; (17) Gautam from Bharadwaj; (18) Bharadwaj from Parasharya; (19) Parasharya from Baijvapayan; (20) Baijvapayan from Kaushikaayani; (21) Kaushikaayani from Ghrit Kaushik; (22) Ghrit Kaushik from Parasharyaayan; (23) the latter from Parasharya; (24) Parasharya from Jatukaranya; (25) Jatukarnya from Aasuraayan and Yaaskmuni; (26) Aasuraayan from Traivani; (27) Traivani from Aupjandhani; (28) Aupjandhani from Aasuri; (29) Aasuri from Bharadwaj; (30) Bharadwaj from Aatreya; (31) Aatreya from Maanti; (32) Maanti from Gautam; (33) Gautam from Vaatsya; (34) Vaatsya from Shandilya; (35) Shandilya from Kaishorya Kaapya; (36) Kaishorya Kaapya from Kumar Haarit; (37) Kumar Haarith from Gaalav; (38) Gaalav from Vidharvi Kaundinya; (39) Vidharvi Kaundinya from Vatsanpat Baabhrav; (40) the latter from Panthaasaubhar; (42) Panthaasaubhar from Ayaasya Angiras; (43) Ayaasya Angiras from Abhuti Twaastra; (43) Abhuti Twaastra from Vishwaroop Twaastra; (44) Vishwaroop Twaastra from Ashwini Kumars; (45) Ashwini Kumars from Dadhyang Atharvan (see 2/5/16-18 of this Upanishad); (47) Dadhyang Atharvan from Atharva Deo (Atharva Veda personified, or a sage who was an expert in this Veda); Atharva Dev from Mritu Praadwansan; (48) the latter from Pradwansan; (49) Pradwansan from Ekarshi; (50) Ekarshi from Viprachitti; (51)

Viprachitti from Vyasti; (52) Vyasti from Sanaaru; (53) Sanaaru from Sanaatan; (54) Sanaatan from Sanag; (55) Sanag from Parmeshthi (the Viraat Purush; Vishnu); and (56) finally Parmeshthi had received this magnificent and divine knowledge from the self-produced Brahma, the creator. We bow most reverentially to the great preacher Brahma! (1-3)

[Note--We note that many names in this list have been repeated more than once, and in many cases it appears that two sages preached one another in turn (serial no. 1-3; 8-12 etc.). The repetition of names might be because there were often two or more sages with the same name, or when the chosen disciple had adopted the name of his Guru as his title or surname (serial no. 10-11 and 16). Further, one sage has preached to a particular sage and again preached to another sage at a different point of time, e.g. sages Kaushik, Gautam and Bharadwaj. All these sages lived either at a single place in a cluster of hermitages and used to gather at a community meeting of sages and seers to discuss and debate upon some metaphysical points. All of them used to travel long distances to some other place to discuss the matter with a far-away sage who would be invited to come and preach at the place from where the sages had come from, much like the exchange of scholars and professors in modern day universities and colleges. So there should be no confusion as to why there appears to be an overlapping of names often in this Brahmin. It should be noted that this Brahmin is repeated verbatim in Canto 2, Brahmin 6 also. It is also similar to Canto 6, Brahmin 5.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 1

This canto describes the various ways in which the supreme, transcendental Brahm can be worshipped and honoured. It describes how that Brahm can be experienced first hand in the form of the Atma which has been variously described as the pure consciousness, as all-pervading and omnipresent, as omniscient and self-illuminated, as attributeless and still displaying the characteristic features of the creation, and which is so esoteric, mystical and enigmatic that the phrase 'Neti-Neti' (i.e. not this not that) has been used to best describe it. This canto has fifteen Brahmins.

This Brahmin no. 1 elaborates upon the concept of universality and completeness of the truthful entity in creation known as Brahm.

1. OM Salutation! That (transcendental, supreme and absolute Reality called Brahm) is complete, wholesome, immutable, indivisible, all-pervading and all-encompassing. This (the world which is a complete revelation of the same Brahm) is also complete and wholesome. From 'that' absolute truth (i.e. the causative factor) is 'this' truth (i.e. the resultant world of deeds and actions) created. When 'this' entity is removed from 'that' entity, what remains is the 'former' (because the world has been created from Brahm, and when by chance the world ceases to exist, it does not imply that the parent factor of the existence of the world would not be there) (1)

[Note--The supreme transcendental Authority, which is the absolute Reality called Brahm in this creation, is complete and wholesome in all respects. It is 'that' entity known as Brahm which has no physical attributes, is all-pervading and all-encompassing, is grand and glorious, and is immutable and indivisible like the sky element. That Brahm is only one; it is non-dual like the sky. When that Brahm realised its true self, it became all-knowing and omniscient simply because there was

nothing else to be known by it. From that 'complete, immutable and indivisible whole' was created this visible creation and the individual creatures that inhabit this creation. Since nothing new was added nor anything subtracted from the original entity, this revealed or manifested creation was just 'another form' of that previously unrevealed or un-manifested entity.

For example, the waves of the ocean rise high from its surface, have great potential to wreck havoc, are physically seen and described as 'waves' which appear to have a distinct and separate identity from the rest of the water of the ocean, but the basic and intrinsic component of the entity known as a wave is nothing else but 'water of the ocean' which has been energised and transformed into waves by way of being whipped up by strong winds and other forces of Nature from the body of water that forms the otherwise calm ocean. The waves rise up, appear distinct from the calm ocean, but when they have spent their energy, when their 'life' comes to an end, they fall back into the main body of the ocean and become one with it, indistinguishable from the rest of the water of the ocean. In this example, the ocean is like Brahm, because it is from the ocean that the visible wave has formed. The true identity of the wave is the water of the ocean. Similarly, this water stands for the Atma of the creature. Even as the ocean and its water are inseparable, Brahm and Atma are also inseparable. The wave might be there or it might not be there, but the ocean and its water are always there.

Likewise, when that Brahm created this world—or rather when this creation evolved from that Brahm, which is represented by the ocean in this example, there was no basic difference between the two, i.e. there were no two separate entities known as Brahm and the creation which came into being as a manifestation of that Brahm. Even as a water molecule that constitute the wave as well as the ocean is complete in itself, 'that' and 'this' forms of Brahm are complete in themselves.

Now, this manifested world has a gross physical body, and out of ignorance the creature thinks that the world that is visible, i.e. the world that has a physical appearance and is verifiable by the sense organs, as opposed to the invisible and attributeless subtle and sublime world which cannot be perceived easily by the sense organs of the creature, is the 'truthful existence'. But this conception is due to ignorance about the fact even as the frothy wave of the ocean might think that it has a separate and distinct existence from the ocean. Remove the ocean from the scene and the wave loses its very meaning, its very source of origin, and its very existence. Similarly, remove Brahm and the world also loses its relevance. But when that ignorance about the wave is removed, when a wise man sees the ocean in its pristine and primary form, which has metamorphosed or revealed itself in another form known as a wave, then all that remains are the ocean and its basic ingredient, the water. Similarly, when an enlightened man sees the same Brahm as being present in the entire creation, visible or invisible, he sees that Brahm everywhere, even in 'this' world as well as 'that' world. He realises that 'this' and 'that' are but two aspects of the same whole, indivisible and attributeless supreme entity known as Brahm.

Again, Brahm is the 'causative factor' because it caused the creation to come into being. Had it not desired to create, there would not have been this stupendous unfolding of the vast canvas known as the cosmos. We can cite the example of energy here to illustrate the phenomenon. Energy does not have any visible form or shape; it changes its form in the sense that it gets converted from one form to another—say from electric energy to light energy. We cannot see 'electric' as such but we surely can see that energy in the form of 'light' of the electric bulb. Likewise, we cannot see Brahm but we surely can see its revelation as the visible world; and just like the example of energy cited here, this Brahm and this world are the same entities but in different forms.

Suppose the bulb fuses, does that mean that the energy known as 'electric' has died? The answer is obviously a resounding 'no'. When the bulb is replaced by another bulb, we get back the same light. The same logic applies to Brahm and the

visible world. Even if the world is removed from sight, the Brahm is universally present as an eternal and imperishable entity.

So this is what is meant in this verse. If ‘this’ world is removed from ‘that’ Brahm, it wouldn’t effect the completeness or wholesomeness or the absolute nature of Brahm even as removing the wave from the ocean would not at all affect the basic nature and definition of the ocean, or removing the bulb or it getting fused would not at all affect the existence of universal energy known as electric as one of its various names. New and identical waves would form in the ocean almost immediately, and no matter how many waves are produced or dissipated, the ocean would not be affected, and every time newer waves would continue to emerge from it and collapse back into it. Similarly, electric energy can be converted into different forms—light in a bulb, kinetic in a motor, sound in a radio, sight is a television, heat in an electric iron etc. Even if the world is left untouched, one day it would collapse into its primary source, the Brahm, even as the wave would ultimately collapse and merge with the ocean once its energy and dissipated, or the energy in any form would gradually dissipate and vanish into its primary invisible form.]

2. OM (the imperishable word representing the supreme Brahm known as Pranav) is ‘Kham Brahm’¹. The monosyllable ‘Kham’ stands for the subtle sky element and it is most ancient (i.e. it was present from the very beginning of creation). That sky in which the wind/air element resides, or which is pervaded uniformly throughout by the wind/air element, is called Kham—this is the preaching of the son of Kaurvyayani.

The Veda is a revelation of this OM which is a manifestation of Brahm². This maxim and axiom is known to Brahmin, or those exalted, erudite, learned and wise persons who are knowledgeable about essentials of this Brahm. This is because what is worthy of being known can only be known through the medium of the Vedas³ (2).

[Note--¹कं—*Kham* refers to the infinite and attributeless sky element, while *Brahm* refers to the supreme transcendental entity which has all the attributes of the sky element, and which pervades throughout it. Brahm is like the infinite sky, and it is known by the word *OM* which is an imperishable word. Even as the sky is infinite and imperishable, this Brahm is also infinite and imperishable. The Sanskrit word for any letter is ‘Akshar’, literally meaning something which is imperishable. Since the word OM consists of letters A, U and M which are themselves imperishable because they essentially consists of sound and sound is a form of energy which does not perish, the composite word OM representing Brahm is also imperishable. This concept of the imperishability of Brahm and its equivalence to the Akshar is elaborately explained in Canto 3, Brahmin 8, verse no. 8-11 of this Upanishad.

The first three words of this verse—OM, Kham and Brahm—have been used as a divine Mantra. That is, these three words are used to honour the supreme Lord of creation as well as to describe the ultimate Truth in existence. The first word OM is a form of salutation and honour, it’s a sort of title establishing the exalted stature of the entity being addressed, the second word Kham is indicative of the infinite and eternal sky element used as an adjective to describe the attributes of the third word which is Brahm, the noun.

The adjective Kham or sky is used because the attributes of the sky element most closely resemble the attributes of Brahm and also because the eternal and imperishable word OM representing the primary sound of creation also exists in the sky, because sound needs space (here, the sky) and a medium (here, the ether) to be generated and propagated. Both these two most closely resemble Brahm as they are the subtlest elements in creation. Now, the sky has some of these unique attributes—it is infinite, eternal, measureless, fathomless, attributeless, spotless, clean, invisible, all-pervading, all-encompassing, immutable, indivisible, etc. Everything that exists in this creation exists in the bowl of the sky. Nothing exists that is beyond the limits of the sky because the sky is ‘endless’.

The sky is not a void or vacant space without any life. It is pregnant with the wind/air element. This is where sound was first generated in the form of cosmic waves that produced the energy that is known as cosmic Naad or Pranav. This was envisioned by the ancients as word OM as this word incorporated the entire gamut of sound generated in the cosmos. The word OM stands for Pranav which is another name for Brahm. This Pranav is known as the cosmic Naad, which is the cosmic vibration present throughout the length and breadth of the creation and which represents the first signs of life. The word OM also symbolises the cosmic sound present in the creation, which in turn is the subtlest of the five elements created as the primary, primordial elements from which the rest of the creation evolved.

The word OM consists of three letters—A, U and M. They represent the three aspects of creation, viz. ‘A’ stand for the origin, ‘U’ for the development and progression, and ‘M’ for the conclusion. Since Brahm also represents these three aspects of creation, the word OM is an apt representation of the latter.

Since all that exist in this creation does so in the space of the sky, or in the womb or bowl of the cosmic space, because nothing can grow outside of it, it follows that the entire creation, from its end to end, symbolically lies in the bosom of Brahm which pervades throughout this sky so much so that they are inseparable and indistinguishable from one another. Therefore, nothing transcends this boundary of Brahm even as nothing goes beyond the sky in its cosmic connotation.

One should use the word OM whenever one wishes to think about Brahm. There is no other better word or syllable or letter or symbol that can be used to remember and honour Brahm. OM is a ‘name’ given to Brahm. So it is very dear to him for the name of person is very dear to him and helps to identify him. According to Vedanta, OM is the nearest analogue to Brahm. Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 1/1/1-10 of the Sam Veda tradition published separately in this series.

The word ‘Kham’ (खं) referring to the sky or space does not only refer to the physical sky that we see with our eyes, but also to the entire space of creation from the metaphysical point of view, i.e. it includes the subtle space present inside the body as well as the space present beyond the reach of the eye’s vision. It is here that everything exists. This sky or Akash element has been elaborately explained in Taittiriyo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in its first section called Shikshalwalli. It is published separately by this humble author in this series of Upanishads classified according to their respective Vedas. The adjective used to described this sky or ‘Kham’ are — (i) Puranam (पुराण) and (ii) Vayuram (वायुरं). These two words mean ancient/traditional and air/wind respectively. That is, the sky is the most ancient, and is the one which is pervaded throughout by the air/wind element. In other words, the sky is not a vacuum because this air is present throughout it. Had there been no air/wind element present in the sky, the latter would have collapsed just like a punctured balloon. It is logical to say so because OM is a sound and sound requires a medium to propagate and travel from one point to another. Since OM represents Brahm, it follows that Brahm propagates and vibrates throughout the space of the sky in the form of the cosmic vibration known as Naad and represented by the world OM. The importance of the letter Kha (ख) as well as Ka (क) has been elaborately described in Sam Veda tradition’s Chandogya Upanishad, 4/10/5.

²What the *Vedas* essentially attempt to narrate and inspire us to honour and worship is that primary, fundamental, irrefutable and universal Truth which is not only the absolute reality of creation but also eclectic, sublime and divine. The Vedas are an embodiment of that Brahm. As has been noted in this verse, Brahm is revealed in the form of the divine word OM. Since the Vedas are revealed in the form of words, and words are known as ‘Akshar’ meaning something that is imperishable and eternal, these are virtually a revelation of Brahm in the form of words. Words are ‘heard’ and that is why the Vedas are primarily called ‘Srutis’, i.e. that which is heard because they consists of words. Further, sound is produced in the form of waves in

ether in the sky. Since ether fills the entire space of the sky, it is deemed that OM also pervades throughout the sky. In its un-manifested form, this OM is known as Brahm, while in its manifested form it is known as the Vedas.

³What is that which is worthy of being known and which can be known by the medium of the Vedas? It is that entity which is 'non dual', unique and one of its singular kind; which is imperishable, majestic, almighty, eternal and infinite. And that is the supreme transcendental Brahm]

Canto 5, Brahmin 2

[This Brahmin describes how the creator's three sons, the Gods, Humans and the Asurs (non-Gods) interpreted the same advice given by him in three different ways.]

1. The three sons of Prajapati Brahma (the Lord and caretaker of the creation), viz. the Gods, the Humans and the Asurs (the non-Gods; the demons), stayed with their father-guardian for some time, observing the strict vows of Brahmacharya (i.e. a regulated, disciplined and religious life of abstinence, continence, self-control and observing all other strict vows as ordained by the scriptures). This they did to prepare themselves to become eligible to accept some profound knowledge from their learned father.

After the prescribed period for which an earnest disciple, or one who is eager to learn something or satisfy his query should observe Brahmacharya, the Gods requested Prajapati, 'Please preach us, give us some wise council, teach us some lesson, give us some instruction or tell us some precept which would act as a moral guide for us, which would enlighten us and show us the path to follow in our lives'.

Prajapati gave them a coded lesson in the form of the Sanskrit alphabet 'Da' (दा). [Prajapati did not give them a long lecture, but a sort of key, or an abbreviated version of what he wished to teach them. He left the interpretation of this word to them, to judge their intelligence.]

Then he asked the Gods, 'Have you understood the import and significance of this word? Did you follow what I mean to teach you? Have you understood this key, or have you been able to decode the encrypted secret in this letter?'

The Gods replied in the affirmative that they have indeed understood the secret message encrypted in the code letter 'Da'. They replied to Prajapati, 'Yes, we have indeed understood it. You have advised us to restrain, subdue and control our various sense organs. [The word 'Da' is the first letter of the Sanskrit word 'Daman' which means to suppress, subdue, overcome, control, exercise restraint upon anything, to vanquish, to conquer etc.]'

Prajapati said, 'It is alright. You have understood it.' (1).

[Note—The Gods represent the various sense organs of the body. These organs have a normal propensity to be restless and seek self gratification. They have an affinity for the material sense objects and rarely are able to restrain themselves. So, their father advised them to learn self-restraint if they wished to retain their godly stature.]

2. Then came the turn of the humans. They requested Prajapati to give them some wise advice; to preach them about some profound axiom/maxim that they can use as a principle guide in their lives. Prajapati pronounced the same letter 'Da' for them as well like he had done for the Gods earlier.

He asked the humans if they have understood the secret meaning of this letter. They replied ‘Yes sir, we have. You have taught us to ‘donate’, to make charity and give alms. [The latter ‘Da’ is the first letter of the Sanskrit word ‘Daan’ meaning charity, donations and giving of alms.]’

Prajapati gave his assent and said, ‘Yes, you have indeed understood my message’ (2).

[Note—Humans have an inherent nature of being selfish and greedy. They would hoard grain, for instance, to make profit while others die of hunger. The chasm between the rich and the poor is seen all around us. So, Prajapati advised them to inculcate the noble virtues of being magnanimous, charitable, compassionate and broad-hearted, instead of being stingy and miserely.]

3. Finally, the Asurs (the demons; the non-Gods) requested Prajapati to teach them also. Prajapati had the same word of advise for them—the letter ‘Da’. Then he asked them, ‘Have you followed what I mean? Did you understand the import of my teaching?’

The Asurs replied, ‘Yes Lord, we have. You have taught us to have mercy. [The letter ‘Da’ is the first letter of the word ‘Daya’ meaning mercy, kindness and compassion.]’

Prajapati told them that they have indeed understood the message. When the clouds rumble and thunder, they remind these three sons of Prajapati, viz. the Gods, the Humans and the Asurs, about the wise advice given to them by Prajapati and reiterate it. The clouds remind them to exercise self control, to donate and make charities, and to have mercy and compassion. So, one must inculcate these three noble virtues in one’s life. This is the great teaching of Prajapati Brahma for his subjects.

[Note—In the case of Demons, Prajapati advised them to learn mercy because they lacked it, because they were very cruel by nature. So we see that the same letter ‘Da’ was interpreted differently by the Gods, the Humans and the Asurs. Another important point to note here is that instead of giving a detailed lecture, Prajapati Brahma just said one single letter, and it was deemed to be enough. Now let us analyse the implication of these two aspects.

(i) The Upanishads are meant for humans because they are essentially crystallise forms of the wisdom contained in the Vedas which were enunciated by enlightened teachers for the benefits of their disciples. A man becomes *God-like* if he has a greater proportion of auspicious, righteous and noble qualities in him. Being a human being, his exalted God-like stature which he has achieved after great effort and diligence are brought to a naught if he develops such negative traits as Ahankar (pride, ego and haughtiness leading to arrogance and hypocrisy) about his exalted stature. So the Upanishadic seers advise him ‘Daman’ or self restraint so that he can exercise self control over his passions and other negative traits. A man who has a greater proportion of virtuous quality, called the ‘Sata Guna’, in him is considered a God-like honourable and exalted person. For him, the exemplary virtue is to have self control which acts as a leash and prevents him from going wayward.

Similarly, for ordinary *Humans* who have a greater proportion of the ‘Raja Guna’, which are the worldly qualities marked by passions and desires for material things of this world, the best advise is to give charity or Daan. This virtue of giving charity and donation as well as extending help to others helps one to suppress his arrogance, haughtiness and ego. It fills him with humility and makes him praise worthy in the society. Constant practice of donation and charity cultivates humility and renunciation in a person. It inspires compassion and mercy in him even without his asking for it because these qualities are a natural corollary to his outlook of helping others.

Finally, a man who is *Demon*-like, i.e. who is cruel and merciless, who lacks compassion and kindness, who has no remorse for his evil deeds and is therefore no better than a demon--such people have the 'Tama Guna' as a predominant factor in them, making them lowly, fallen, pervert and evil. For them, mercy and compassion is the best path to follow, for once a cruel person inculcates mercy and compassion in him, once a ruthless man begins to have compassion and mercy for others, it is needless to say that he will not remain a demon or an Asur anymore. What makes a man a God, and ordinary human and a demon is the type of temperament, the type of virtues and the basic nature that he possesses. This verse prescribes the antidote to any kind of moral disease that a man might have.

The three 'Ds' should be the tenet that each man must follow, because everyone of us have lesser or greater quantum of the three qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama in us, and we need to simultaneously inculcate all the three virtues represented by the letter Da, i.e. Daman, Daan and Daya respectively in order to lift ourselves from the lowly position that we find ourselves in, to the lofty position represented by the supreme Brahm. It must be noted here that the word 'God' refers to a state of existence which is higher than that of an ordinary 'human being', and similarly the word 'human' refers to the state of existence which is higher than that of the 'Asur'. So by inculcating these grand virtues, a man can lift himself from any existential state in which he is currently present to the higher state of existence, and ultimately reach the pinnacle of being one like the supreme Brahm.

(ii) The three sons of Prajapati had observed the rigorous self-disciplined life of *Brahmacharya*, which refers to a life compatible with Brahm realisation; it refers to the path that is conducive to Brahm-realisation; it implies the following of a path which is in sync with the path prescribed by the scriptures which leads one to Brahm. It is to behave in a righteous and auspicious manner which is akin to doing severe Tapa (i.e. observing austerity, doing penances and upholding strict religious and moral vows). This Brahmacharya helps to clean the inner self of the aspirant even as fasting helps to clean the body of all impurities and toxins present in it and prepares it for examinations by a doctor. That is why, prior to a surgical operation, the patient is generally advised to fast by the doctor. Brahmacharya prepared the three sons of Prajapati to understand what was being taught to them, as it is always easier to grasp a subject when the mind is rested, relaxed and alert. If a man does not observe Brahmacharya, or when the mind and intellect are clouded by evil thoughts, it would not be prepared sufficiently enough to understand great spiritual truths even if they are explained at length in detail. We must have noticed how people feel drowsy during religious discourses and meditation sessions because they are so physically and mentally tired that their mind is not inclined to grasp what is being taught. So this aspect of understanding of great truths and codes of conduct said in monosyllables shows the importance of self discipline and austerity which makes the mind alert and receptive to great truth and sublime principles enshrined in the Upanishads.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 3

[This Brahmin describes the metaphysical importance of the heart in its subtle form. It elaborates upon the prescription of Prajapati in the previous Brahmin that only those who have the three qualities of Daman, Daan and Daya are able to realise Brahm.]

1. This subtle heart** is a manifestation of Prajapati Brahma, of the supreme transcendental Brahm, and it is all there is to it in this creation¹.

The Sanskrit word ‘Hriday’ consists of three letters—viz. ‘Hri’, ‘Da’ and ‘Ya’. Letters are called ‘Akshar’ in Sanskrit, meaning that which is imperishable and does not decay. Hence, these three letters representing the heart stand for the three noble qualities that the subtle heart possesses.

The first letter ‘Hri’ is an acronym that refers to the virtue of ‘acceptance and taking’ something from others. A person who is wise enough to understand the import of this letter is given tributes and honours by those who are close to him (such as his near and dear ones; his acquaintances and kith and kin) as well as by those who are not so close (i.e. such as even his opponents and people of distant places)².

The second letter is ‘Da’ which is an acronym for ‘giving’; it means donation, charity and alms giving. A person who is wise enough to understand the import of this letter is given tributes and honours by those who are close to him (such as his near and dear ones; his acquaintances and kith and kin) as well as by those who are not so close (i.e. such as even his opponents and people of distant places)³.

The third letter is ‘Ya’ meaning ‘to go’. A person who realises the significance and import of this word goes to heaven⁴ (1).

[Note—¹The supreme consciousness of creation known as Brahm has revealed itself as the pure Atma and took up residence in the subtle heart of the living being (e. g. man). The Atma is not only consciousness but most enlightened and wise. The heart is also the centre for emotions and sentiments that a man possesses. It is through the medium of the heart that one gets attracted and attached to the world, thereby creating so many relationships and connections. It is through the heart that one makes so many hopes, aspirations, desires and expectations, and then gets hooked to them. This world exists only because the heart loves to enjoy its pleasures and comforts.

Therefore, the heart is the seat of that consciousness (the authority known as the Atma which is Brahm personified) which creates and sustains this world as its own offspring, and subsequently gets endeared to it and attached to it. So the heart is likened to the creator Prajapati and to Brahm.

²This word refers to the exalted Gods. They are imperishable and they accept oblations and offerings made by men to the fire sacrifices. Gods are worshipped and honoured by all the creatures, by those who treat a particular God as their patron, and even by others who have other patron Gods but pay their tributes to all the exalted souls known as a God. In other words, an exalted man who displays God-like virtues in him, whose heart possesses noble, righteous and auspicious qualities generally associated with Gods, is shown respect and reverence by all the people in this world.

Since the word ‘Hri’ indicates the ability to accept, such men accept all the good virtues and inculcate in themselves all the noble qualities that they come across in this world. The word ‘Hri’ also means to steal—so they ‘steal’ all the badness that others possess and give them goodness instead, because the next word ‘Da’ means to give.

People pay their respects to such a noble man and revere him with the same reverence that they have for the exalted Gods.

³The word ‘Da’ meaning giving also implies broadness of heart and perspective; wide angle views of this existence instead of being selfish and narrow minded. Such people have a broad heart and become magnanimous and charitable. They give love and joy to all those around them. This is because only who has something in abundance can think of giving it to others. It also implies being non-attached to worldly things, because only a man who has a renunciate disposition of heart can ever think of giving away the precious assets of life to others for their use and benefit, for it is a very difficult proposition to part with wealth acquired with such great efforts. Their life is like a clean river that nourishes life and gives fertility to this otherwise barren earth, while itself accepting all the garbage thrown into it mercilessly by stupid and non-grateful creatures.

People pay their tributes to such ‘noble-hearted’ magnanimous men and they even collect donations for their cause, give them alms and make charities to them. That is why monks, friars, mendicants, sages etc. are given alms and donations by humble men as well as by great kings. We have already seen how king Janak had donated thousands of cows and many thousand grams of gold to great sages and seers during religious sacrifices and discourses.

⁴The word ‘Ya’ also refers to the God named Yam who is the God of Death and who judges a man at the time of death on what he has done during this life, and then decides the reward or punishment—i.e. if the man’s life had been righteous and noble, he is rewarded with heaven, while if he had led a pervert and sinful life he is punished by being condemned to the hell. So, a person who has the earlier two virtues in his heart, i.e. who had been sincere and honest in implementing those virtues, ‘goes’ to heaven; the Yam sends him to heaven. In other words, a man who inculcates these noble virtues as described in this Canto no. 5 is fortunate and is rewarded with an exalted life that is equivalent to being in heaven.

****The heart displays such noble virtues as compassion, mercy and kindness; it is by the heart that one accepts anything or gives up anything in this world—because unless the heart is involved in either accepting or giving, these exercises lack emotional involvement, commitment and sincerity. So, it is the heart which implements the three noble virtues advised by Prajapati to the Gods, Humans and Asurs—i.e. exert self control, give charity and donation, and show mercy and compassion. Without the heart the man cannot live even for a moment—thereby proving that the all-important life giving consciousness is present in the heart and not in any other parts of the body. Therefore, the heart signifies the glorious and divine virtues of the supreme and transcendental Brahm as displayed by the Atma residing inside it. The virtues of the heart are actually the virtues of the Atma effusing out from it much like the light of a lamp radiates out from it and seems to come out from a translucent covering that might be put around the lamp.**

The heart has three characteristics—it tends to ‘accept or acquire’ any good thing that it does not already have, to ‘give’ something for a good cause, and to remain ever engrossed in or attracted towards things—or ‘go’ towards things—that are good and charming for it.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 4

[This Brahmin builds upon the concept of heart as an exalted abode of the truthful, supreme and transcendental Brahm.]

1. This subtle heart is indeed a habitat and an embodiment of ‘Satya’ or Truth¹ that is universal, irrefutable and irrevocable. It is an embodiment of the great ‘Yaksha’, i.e. is most adorable and honourable. It is famous and renowned as the stupendous manifestation of Brahm. A wise and erudite person who is enlightened about this grand virtue of heart, i.e. he who knows that the heart possesses the noble attributes that make it equivalent to Brahm and equally revered and important, is able to vanquish all the Lokas (worlds). His enemies become subdued by him².

On the other hand, those who regard this fact about the subtle heart as being false and untrue are defeated by their enemies and get to ruin.

Those who realise the truth about the great and sublime Brahm who is the revered Yaksha (i.e. who is most honourable and admired supreme authority in this creation), who is the first born³ (i.e. most primary and ancient, having been in

existence even before the rest of creation came into being), and who is ‘truth’ personified, is rewarded accordingly because ‘Brahm is indeed the Truth⁴’ and vice versa (1).

[Note—¹A wise person understands the real meaning of the word *truth*-- that which cannot be denied is the ‘truth’. He realises that what is visibly seen in this world is a manifestation of ‘truth’ because when one sees anything with one’s own eyes it is impossible to deny its existence, i.e. it is the ‘truth’. But what about that which is ‘not visible’, such as things that have gone past or that would exist in the future but not visible at present, or for that matter any thing that is beyond the line of sight or other senses of perception. Do they not exist? Surely they do because the man’s reach is limited to his immediate surroundings. His mind has a deeper and longer reach, but again it has its own limitations. It can dream, but again dreams depend much on a person’s experience in the physical world. So, in short, the wise man realises that there is surely something that is beyond comprehension and understanding of his mind and intellect, which is beyond the grasp of his senses and perceptions. That ‘greater and infinite’ truth which is beyond reach is known as the supreme transcendental Brahm.

Only a ‘living’ being is able to witness the visible world, and the heart is at the core of this whole setup because without the heart no man can ever hope to live. Even if the brain is not functioning as is in the case of chronically brain damaged persons, the man continues to live as long as the heart continues to beat. So, the heart is the seat of consciousness called the Atma that keeps the man alive against all odds. The Atma is the micro level counterpart of the cosmic Soul of the creation called Brahm.

²A wise and truly self-realised person sees the Brahm in the entire creation, even in his enemies. This holistic and eclectic view of the world creates in him a profound sense of equanimity, equality, tolerance and fortitude. He begins to treat the world with great love and compassion, kindness and magnanimity, the notions that have their origin in the heart because it is the heart more than any other organ of the body that is the centre of such emotions and sentiments. These attributes make the man respected in the society, and the latter reciprocate his gestures. That is, such a man is able to *vanquish and subdue* even his enemy and *conquer* the world at large. It is a figure of speech implying that he has become the ‘king of hearts’.

³Brahm is ‘unborn and eternal’ because ‘truth’ is also unborn and eternal. So how come it is the *first born*? Well, here we refer to the heart of an individual and the first vital spark of life that was injected into the embryo. It was only when the heart started to beat that the creature showed ‘first’ signs of life; prior to that there was the silence of death and ‘no life’. Therefore, when the heart is treated as a manifestation of the supreme life-giving Brahm, then it is apt to say that Brahm was the first born in respect to the rest of the organs of the living being because once the heart starts beating, the rest of these organs also spring to life.

⁴How is Truth synonymous with Brahm? It is because ‘truth’ has qualities and virtues that are possessed by no one other than Brahm—such as for example the power to create and regenerate which Brahm possesses as the supreme consciousness of the creation described in the next Brahmin. It was from this ‘Truth’ that Hiranyagarbha and Viraat Purush were created, who in turn created the Gods and the rest of the creation. Truth has no specific physical forms that are special to it for anything that ‘is there’ is the ‘truth’ much like the Brahm which cannot be specially pinpointed but its existence cannot be denied either, especially when its manifestation in the form of this visible world is there for everyone to witness. Truth is universal and uniform, it is irrefutable and irrevocable, it is immutable and indivisible, and it is applicable to everything that has a substance and pith much like Brahm.

****The importance of the heart as a manifestation of the supreme Authority has been elaborately explained in Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 7.]**

Canto 5, Brahmin 5

[This Brahmin describes the genesis of creation and the unfolding of the visible world as an evidence of the existence of Brahm as ‘truth’, because what is visible, tangible and verifiable is indeed the ‘truth’.]

1. This visible world (which is ‘truth’ because it can be verified and seen first hand) was primarily in the form of ‘Apaha’ or the water element in the form of the primordial cosmic gel. Therefore, the latter was the ‘truth’ also; in fact it was the ‘fundamental truth’ from which the rest of the myriad forms of truth evolved. That is, it was from this basic ‘truth’ (i.e. the primary water element called ‘Apaha’ or the primordial cosmic gel that existed before the rest of the creation took its shape) that the rest of the world (i.e. the visible world which is ‘true’ because it can be verified and seen in practical terms) evolved. That is why ‘truth’ is an embodiment of Brahm.

Now, this Brahm created Prajapati (in the form of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm that incorporated the entire creation in its self), and the latter created the different Gods (representing the various forces of Nature that would be needed to carry forward the process of creation; these were the primary Gods)¹.

All the Gods worship, honour and pay their tributes to that supreme Truth in the form of Brahm².

That supreme entity known as Brahm has a name, and it is ‘Satya’ meaning ‘truth’. The name Satya consists of three ‘Akshars’ or letters—viz. ‘Sa’, ‘Ta’ and ‘Ya’. Out of these three letters, the first and the third letters (i.e. Sa and Ya) are truly ‘truthful’ because they are immortal (and free from the fear of decay and death), while the second letter (i.e. Ta) represents that which is mortal (and therefore subject to decay and decay). But this second letter is protected from both the sides by those letters that are immortal (because the letter ‘Ta’ is preceded by ‘Sa’ and proceeded by ‘Ya’)³.

Hence, the entire word ‘Satya’ is immortal because though the middle letter represents mortality but it is cupped and protected from all the sides by immortality, making the entity represented by this word as immortal⁴ (1).

[Note—¹In the very beginning there was no activity in the cosmic gel present in the vast bosom of the sky element. We can imagine it as the ‘sleeping Brahm’. Now when the time came for the new creation to come into being, there was some activity in the form of ripples or some kind of movement in this eternally calm water element signifying that some sort of cosmic activity was about to start.

This gel began to coagulate much like the yolk of an egg. It was then visualised to have been injected with the first spark of life, and was called Hiranyagarbha because of its yellowish or greenish colour. That is why green and yellow colours are synonymous with fertility and life.

This Hiranyagarbha represented the cosmic subtle body of Brahm, while the Brahm itself was the cosmic causal body because it was the Brahm that was the ‘cause’ of the Hiranyagarbha to come into being.

Therefore, this Brahm, as the causal body of the cosmos, would then be called the ‘first revelation of the truth’, and hence called the ‘first born’ as described in Brahmin 4 above.

Now, it was from Brahm, the cosmic Soul and pure consciousness that everything else that exists came into being. It was from Brahm that Hiranyagarbha was born, and

from the latter came into being the Viraat Purush, forming the gross body of Brahm. Till this point everything was 'invisible'.

Then the Viraat decided to reveal himself as the 'visible' world. So the Viraat created the different forces of Nature in order to initiate the process of unfolding the visible creation and then regulating it once it was unveiled. So the Gods are primarily of two types—one, those who were created as manifestations of the primary elements and forces of creation, such as the Water God, Fire God, Wind God and the different Vasus representing the richness and life sustaining properties of the Earth element. In this setup, Brahm was represented by the eternal, infinite, measureless and imperishable Sky element. When the creation and its inhabitant creatures came into being, then the sense organs and their powerful potentials were personified as other Gods. According to certain Upanishadic versions, when the Viraat Purush had revealed himself as the body of the man, then these primary Gods who had emerged from the body of the Viraat took up residence in the corresponding organ of the newly created man. So, the God exist in two basic forms—in their cosmic form representing the powerful forces of Nature as well as in a micro form as the patron Gods that govern the individual creature.

²The Gods represent the best of all that has come into existence, therefore they worship the best and not the second best, as it were. The father of the Gods is the Viraat, but instead of worshipping him they pay their tributes to the 'great father' without whom even the Viraat would not have come into existence, he would not have been able to create these Gods, and he would not have been able to bestow upon them their exalted stature. So they decided to honour the supreme Authority to which the almighty Viraat even pays his tributes—and that authority is Brahm, and the latter is Truth personified.

³The letters are called 'Akshar' in Sanskrit meaning that which is imperishable and immortal, that which does not decay and die.

The first letter *Sa* is a prefix used in the sense of fullness, perfection, unity, connection, junction, conjunction, similarity, equality, possession, procuring, bestowing and participating. When compounded with nouns to form adjectives and adverbs it may mean, according to context, 'with, together or along with, accompanied by, added to, having, possessing, containing, having the same' etc. It also means the air or wind element. (Reference—Sir Monier-Williams' Sanskrit-English Dictionary). It indicates that indivisible and complete eternal entity which links this present world with the past world, and hence must have been there in the intervening period when neither the past existed nor the present had come into existence. That is, it was 'there' even after everything apparently ended and before anything started to be in existence in the present form.

The third letter *Ya* also indicates 'this' which is current, in vogue, imperishable and immortal, that which does not decay and die even if it appears to do so at the end of its present phase. Therefore it refers to the Atma. It is the first of the semi-vowels and indicates 'the same way as always; a goer or mover; the wind or air element; joining, restraining, fame, attainment' etc. Therefore, it also indicates that thing which remains the same even though it appears to go or move from here to another place, such as the case of the air or wind element, and which joins this with that. In other words, the letter *Ya* applies to that future phase of existence that paves the way for the newer forms of existence to come into being from the present one, and therefore is much like a bridge to maintain continuity between the two banks of existence, the current and the next. Metaphorically, it is immortal and imperishable because the cycle of creation is a complete circle.

In between the two extremes lies the second letter *Ta* which is an acronym indicating something which is worthy of being abandoned, discarded, rejected or left behind—i.e. that which is 'Tajya'. Only that which is not truthful and not real is Tajya. That which is not the truth is mortal because only the 'truth' is immortal and imperishable while the rest, i.e. that which is non-truth or false, is mortal.

⁴In metaphysical perspective, the word Sa refers to the truthful Brahm that was present before this creation came into being, while Ya also refers to that truthful Brahm in the form of the Atma that remained after this creation ceases to exist in its current form. The second letter Ta refers to this mortal mundane world which is worthy of rejection because it is riddled with so many falsehoods and faults. This mortal world is however surrounded and protected by Sa and Ya, and since it helps to symbolically complete the circle, it forms an integral part of the universal Truth. So in essence nothing is false for a wise and erudite man who has that broadness of vision. Hence, the word Satya or Truth incorporates in its ambit the entire gamut of creation—both the truthful as well as the non-truthful.

A similarity can be drawn here between the metaphysical interpretation of these three letters of 'Satya' and the three letters of OM which are A, U and M. In both the cases, the first letter indicates the origin of creation, the second letter indicates the existence and expansion, and the third letter indicates its conclusion.

The word *Satya* means—true, actual, real, genuine, sincere, honest, truthful, faithful, pure, virtuous, auspicious, righteous, successful, effectual, valid etc. All these epithets apply to Brahm.

Canto 1, Brahmin 2, verse no. 2 also emphasise that 'water' was the only thing that existed in the beginning. Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse no. 13 says that Truth is like the essence called the 'honey' of all the creatures and all that exists.]

2. The Aditya or the Sun is a visible manifestation of the Truth (described in verse no. 1). The Purush (the Supreme Being, the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross manifestation of the cosmic consciousness known as Brahm) that is present (revealed) in the form of the Sun or the Aditya is also the one who is present in the right eye of a living being. They are interchangeable and synonymous with each other¹.

The Purush represented by the Aditya or the Sun God is sublimely present in a symbolic manner in the form of the bright rays emanating from the Sun that spread light that empowers the faculty of sight present in the eye of the creature to see. Similarly, the Purush which forms the Pran or the vital consciousness which enables the faculty of sight to function and the eyes to see symbolically resides in the Sun as its own vitality and vigorous source of endless energy that keeps the cauldron of the Sun on the boil for infinity.

Hence, when the Purush (i.e. the Pran or the vitality and consciousness present in the organ known as the eye) leaves the eye, it 'eyes' (sights, looks, aims at) the environs of the Sun or Aditya. Once the rays leave the eye, they never come back² (2).

[Note—¹The word *Purush* has been defined in Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse no. 18 as the entity that resides somewhere firmly. Here that Purush is the vast macrocosmic all-pervading and all-encompassing cosmic consciousness called Brahm revealed in the invisible form of the Viraat Purush who represents Brahm's gross body at the cosmic level. This supreme Purush, though most majestic and grand, is invisible, so how do the creation know who or like what it is? The answer is the Sun or Aditya. This Sun obviously is the brightest object in the otherwise dark realm of the world—it is like the symbolic 'eye' of the world because without the light of the Sun it would be impossible to see anything. The Sun gives light, heat and energy to the world, and life on this world would have been non-existent without the Sun. This is the picture at the macro level, while at the micro level of the individual creature, it is the creature's 'eye' that resembles the 'celestial eye' in the form of the Sun. Both have 'light' in them, and both are equally essential for the living beings to see. They co-exist because the eye needs the light of the Sun to see this world, while the Sun needs people with eyes to do justice to its magnanimity and benevolence of giving light to this creation, to honour the Sun for its grand abilities of creating and disbursing light

and energy, for what is the use of its giving light to the creation if all the creatures were blind, if they did not have the ability to see?

²This is a metaphoric way of saying that once a man becomes blind, he cannot recover his sight. This verse has another connotation. The 'light' is indicative of wisdom and knowledge that a man possesses, the 'eye' is in this context the eye of wisdom. In other words, if a man has no wisdom, no erudition, no sagacity, no enlightenment and no knowledge of the truth about Brahman or reality, then he is as good as a man who is blind. The 'rays' of the Sun symbolise the laser-like penetrating powers of the intellect and mind to see beyond what is apparent and arrive at the fundamental truths by removing the chaff from the grain.

In this context refer also to Canto 1, Brahmin 15, verse no. 12, 19; Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 2; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no.12; Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 4; and Canto 4, Brahmin 2, verse no. 2.]

3. That truthful Purush (i.e. the supreme Brahman which is the cosmic consciousness) manifested as the brilliant Sun has the elementary word 'Bhu' as its head. The head of that Purush is one and this word also consists of one letter—so the latter is an apt acronym for the supreme One's head. His two arms are represented by the elementary word 'Bhuvha'. This word has two letters and the arms are also two in number—so they correspond well to each other. The third word 'Swaha'¹ represents the two legs of the Purush that helps to establish him. There are two letters in this word—so the similarity is also apt.

The secret codified name of this mysterious and majestic Purush is 'Ahar'². Those wise, erudite and learned people who are acquainted with this enigmatic Purush with this macrocosmic form having this nickname are able to vanquish their sins and eliminate them (3).

[Note—¹The word *Bhuvha* has two letters—viz. Bhu + Vaha. Similarly, *Swaha* has two letters—Swa + Vaha. These three words—i.e. Bhu, Bhuvha, and Swaha are called 'Vyahriti' of the primary words pronounced by the creator Brahman at the time of creation (Taittiriya Upanishad, 1/5/1). These represented the three primary Vedas—the Rig, Sam and Yajur (Jaimini, 1/26/6; Chaturveda Upanishad, verse no.1) which were the repository of forms of primary knowledge that came into existence simultaneously with creation and were created by the creator as a means of dissemination of cosmic information and ethereal knowledge about the creation and its reality.

²The word *Ahar* is made from the primary sound 'Han or Hun' which forms its root. This Han or Hun means one that kills, assassinates and eliminates. Here it does not mean that the supreme Purush is a killer of living beings—it's ridiculous even to think so. Therefore it refers to the ability of the Purush to get rid of, to vanquish and eliminate all negative traits that pull him away from what is auspicious and righteous and noble.

At the time of creation, the man was created in the image of the Viraat Purush. Therefore this verse implies that a man is the only creature in the entire creation that is empowered with the unique ability to vanquish evilness and perversions from his life, thereby making it holy and divine, and consequentially ensuring that he attains freedom from the endless cycle of birth and death. Aside from this point, this verse, by describing the vastness of the legendary 'Purush', hints that the man is the highest positioned creature in the hierarchy of creation created by the Supreme Being. He occupies an exalted stature in the scheme of things at the micro level and that he should not exploit his position to kill and harm others, but act like the great Lord whose image he is, and give protection to others who depend upon him.]

4. That Purush (the supreme transcendental Brahm) manifested as the faculty of sight present in the right eye has his head represented by the word 'Bhu'. The head is one and this word also consists of one letter. His arms are represented by the word 'Bhuvha'. This word has two letters and the arms are also two in number. His two legs are represented by the word 'Swaha'; this word has two letters and the legs are also two. The legs help to establish that Purush.

The secret and mysterious name of the Purush is 'Aham'¹. A wise, erudite and learned man who worships and adores the majestic and grand virtues of Brahm with this macrocosmic vision and as having this nickname is able to vanquish and eliminate all his sins and evilness (4).

[Note—¹The word *Aham* literally means 'I am' or 'me'. In other words, a self-realised man understands that the divine supreme Purush who is being discussed here is no one else but the man himself. The Sun God resides in his eye, symbolically representing the eye of that Purush. Metahorically, this eye is the eye of wisdom and enlightenment because it shows the world in its truthful form to the man if he has the commensurate wisdom for the purpose. It refers to the ability of the eye to be able to peep into the reality and see the truth behind the façade of falsehoods. This verse is an extension of verse no. 2 and 3. Refer also to Canto 2, Brahmin 3, verse no. 5-6 in this context.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 6

[This Brahmin asserts that the Mana or mind is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm's majestically stupendous and gloriously magnificent potentials, powers and authority.]

1. This Purush (the supreme transcendental Brahm revealed as the invisible Viraat Purush at the cosmic level) has manifested himself as the Mana (subtle mind and heart along with their unique virtues) that is characterised by the truthful virtues that are eclectic and divine like the glorious and magnificent splendour of a brilliant fount of radiant light¹. That Purush is ensconced and concealed in the inner chambers of the subtle heart just like the grain of rice or oat is present concealed from view in the bowls of the earth. That Purush is the Lord and master of all, and he rules over everything in this visible world² (1).

[Note—¹The mind and heart represents the subtle body of the creature. Though the word *Mana* technically refers to the mind, but it also includes the heart because both these units work together to decide the character and personality of a man as well as his general temperaments, habits, inclinations, dispositions, purposes, intentions, behavioural patterns, desires, wishes, aspirations, yearnings, expectations, hopes, passions, ideas, notions, emotions and sentiments etc. If the mind and heart are pure and uncorrupt, then the glorious virtues of the Atma, which is inherently pure and pristine, shine through. This Atma is the consciousness in which form the Purush has revealed himself.

The different auspicious, righteous and noble virtues that are exhibited by the Purush present (residing) in the Mana are manifested in the form of the wisdom, erudition, sagacity, prudence, astuteness, learning and enlightenment exhibited by the mind-intellect of a self-realised man. In other words, the 'light' of the Purush effuses from the Atma, the true self of the man, and spreads to illuminate the entire being of a self-realised man--i.e. a man who has realised that the supreme Purush or the truthful Brahm is no where else but in his own self becomes like a beacon of hope and

salvation for all around him. His enlightenment forms a divine halo around him that illuminates the surroundings just like the light of a lamp illuminates the dark room.

²The supreme Brahm resides as the pure consciousness called the Atma in the bosom of the creature. A wise man is able to exercise *control* not only over others by the virtue of his superior knowledge and intellect, but also over his own sense organs, his own self. Since the world exists because the Mana has decided that it is there, i.e. the mind imagines that the world has an existence and then begins to believe in its own imagination; the mind drives the intellect to 'see' or visualise the world full of attractions and allurements. Then the charms of this imaginary world begin to entice the heart and the man is hooked to it. The heart begins to long for the various comforts and pleasures that gratify the sense organs, and then it directs the mind to acquire them by planning how to do so.

Once the man who is wise realises that all this is an illusionary play and not the real thing, he disassociates himself from everything that 'seem' to exist but are only an imagination of the fickle but fertile mind. This dissociation is tantamount to controlling his sense organs and therefore the world because this world has its importance only as long as it serves the self interest of the man. This is what is meant by saying that the Purush, who is the true self of the man and represented by his Atma which is an embodiment of light, where light stands for 'enlightenment and wisdom', is able to control the visible world symbolising his sense organs and their attachments with the outside material world of sense objects.

Refer Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 4-7, 9, 12; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 20; and Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 6.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 7

[In this Brahmin, the Electric, with its blinding dazzle, its stupendous splendour and its astounding potentials, is treated as being a manifestation of the magnificent powers and glories of Brahm.]

1. It is said that Electric is Brahm. Since Brahm has the unique abilities and authority, the necessary powers and potentials to crush and eliminate sins signifying all that which is non-auspicious, non-righteous, non-virtuous and not noble, it is regarded as being equivalent to Electric¹. He who realises that Electric is (a manifestation of) Brahm, all his sins and evilness (represented by the darkness created by ignorance of the truth and reality) are destroyed, shattered and eliminated by this Brahm in the form of the Electric² (1).

[Note—¹The *electric* is the most powerful force in Nature, in fact more powerful than the fire because the damage caused by the fire is not so quick and so extensive as the one caused by a strike of a bolt of lightening. The astonishing dynamic powers and magnificence of this electric was witnessed by ancient sages and seers when they saw the bolt of lightening striking an object, such as a tree which was reduced to a burning hulk immediately. Therefore, when they searched the forces of Nature to try to draw a parallel between the stupendous powers and great authority of the Supreme Being and what could be witnessed in the practical world to prove it, they hit upon this lightening as its best representative. The Electric had two typical attributes—one was its stupendous power and astounding punch, and the other was its blinding brilliance. Both were symbolic of the great powers and authority of the Supreme Being.

Sin stands for everything that is not good and holy; all things that are detrimental for the spiritual freedom and welfare of the creature and lead to its demotion in the spiritual hierarchy are classified as a sin. Therefore, all that which is unrighteous,

inauspicious, ignoble, unholy and pervert, all that which is worthy of being rejected, abandoned, forsaken and abhorred is a sin. Every sort of felony and misdemeanor, every sort of transgression of the right path, every sort of fault and waywardness, and every sort of deviation from what is traditionally and conventionally regarded as good is classified as a sin. Further, such behaviour and thoughts as well as deeds and actions that are motivated and driven by any of these elements are classified as sinful.

²Sin is a metaphor for darkness and ignorance because one who is enlightened and learned would never indulge in things that give him a bad name and ruin his future prospects. Even a stupid person would not willingly commit anything that would cause him harm. So those who are really 'sinful' deserve the strongest of punishment. Even as a serious disease requires a strong medicine, or a strong chest (vault or trunk) needs a strong hammer to wrench it open, such people need the force that is equivalent to that shown by Electric to crush their sins. Since *Brahm* is the almighty Lord of creation, the Electric is an apt metaphor for the former. It is this Brahm who decides what punishment a creature deserves for its sins and in this respect Brahm is unforgiving and surgical like the Electric.

In other words, the sinful tendencies that have formed a strong armour that has enclosed the delicate Atma from all sides can only be broken by the 'strong and powerful punch' of Brahm when the creature is made to undergo punishment for his sins. Only the king can decide what punishment is to be awarded to a criminal, so it is only the Brahm that can decide what and how the sinful creature's punishment should be.

Again, since ignorance and lack of correct knowledge are at the foundation of all sinful deeds, it follows that only the light of enlightenment and truth, which are the grand attributes of Brahm, can show the right path to the misled creature and give it the chance to mend and repent itself. The dazzle and brilliant light of the electric represents these glorious virtues of Brahm. So in brief, it is the light of enlightenment and wisdom as well as the punishment in the form of sincere regret, repentance and penance marked by hard sufferance called 'Tapa' that can in effect help the creature get rid of the taint of sins that have engulfed it from all the sides. This is the mystical importance of Electric as a manifestation of Brahm. It shows wisdom to the creature, lends him dynamism and energy, and at the same time it helps him to burn his sins. It also punishes if he does not do so.

Refer Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 4; and Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse no. 8 in this context.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 8

[This Brahmin describes how the faculty of speech is like the all wish fulfilling cow representing Brahm.]

1. A wise man should adore and worship the faculty of speech, called Vaani, just like it were the all wish fulfilling cow called 'Kamdhenu'¹.

The four udders of this cow are—(a) Swaha Kar, (b) Vashat Kar, (c) Hant Kar, and (d) Swadha Kar. The two udders called Swaha Kar and Vashat Kar provide nourishment to the Gods. The udder named Hant Kar sustains the humans. And the udder called Swadha Kar provides sustenance to the Pittars (the spirits of dead ancestors)².

For that cow represented by the faculty of speech called Vaani, the bull is the Pran (breath; the vital wind that helps the man to keep himself alive and which gives him energy to speak), and the calf is represented by his Mana (mind and heart)³ (1).

[Note—¹The faculty of speech called *Vaani* represents the three Vedas, i.e. Rig, Sam and Yajur. These three Vedas are metaphors for all the knowledge that exist in this creation, and the speech is used not only to chant the hymns of these Vedas but also to teach them and learn them. Since any body of knowledge is like a fount that nourishes the mind and makes the man enlightened, wise and learned, these Vedas are especially of great value because they help the man to be enlightened about his own true self and about the truth of the creation. Therefore they are like a cow called *Kamdhenu* which is the cow of the Gods. The cow provides milk to sustain and nourish the physical body of the creature. Even as the milk of a cow is a wholesome and self-sufficient food, the Vedas learnt, taught and recited by the medium of the faculty of speech are like the milk for the spirit of the creature.

A man expresses his desires, hopes and expectations by the faculty of speech. His knowledge, erudition and wisdom are revealed when he speaks about them. He teaches and advises others through this medium. In short we can say that Brahm or Purush speaks through this faculty. Or, in other words, Brahm reveals himself by *Vaani*.

²The first two udders called *Swaha* and *Vashat* symbolise the offerings made to the fire sacrifice that are meant for the Gods and from which they derive their sustenance. The word *Swaha* is generally pronounced at the time of actual offering to the fire pit, while *Vashat* refers to the special fire sacrifices meant to honour specific Gods and are done with specific Mantras or mystical formulae and words especially dedicated to that particular deity. Both *Swaha* and *Vashat* are used synonymously because they both are used to offer offerings during fire sacrifices and complement each other, the former being a general term while the latter being God-specific (Taittiriya S. 7/5/5/3). These two words are related to the ‘Vaishwanar Agni’ (see Brahmin 9 below) and the Sun God (Maitreyi Brahmin, 4/6/7; Shatpath Brahmin, 1/7/2/11).

Hant Kar refers to that portion of food that a householder is ordained to keep aside from his regular meal and is meant for a guest or a wondering mendicant or friar who might pass that way and come to his door to beg for food. It is usually of the size equivalent to sixteen eggs of a peacock, or equal to four mouthfuls of food. So this symbolic udder of the celestial cow sustained and nourished the mortal humans.

The fourth udder stands for *Swadha* and it represents the food offerings in the form of rounded balls of cooked cereals offered as food to the spirit of dead ancestors. At the time of final offering, the word *Swadha* is pronounced. This should be compared to *Swaha* which is pronounced while the offerings are made to the Gods during fire sacrifices.

³The *Pran* is the vital spark of life present inside the body as its breath without which the body would not have the stamina and vigour to live at all, what to say of speaking anything by the medium of the faculty of speech known as *Vaani*. Even as a cow is made pregnant by a *bull* although she runs on seeing it with the bull in hot pursuit, the *Vaani* is activated and made effective and energised by the presence of the vital *Pran* in the body. This *Pran* enables the pure conscious Atma to reveal its glorious self by impregnating the *Vaani* with wisdom, erudition, scholarship and expertise, while at the same time it keeps the man inspired to talk and speak endlessly. It provides the required impetus and energy to enable the man to speak energetically and enthusiastically, almost endlessly and on all imaginable subjects. When the man’s *Pran* is active and in prime shape, he can use his voice to sing melodiously and speak warmly, but when the life in him begins to ebb his speech falters and he speaks with a weak voice.

Pran is likened to the bull because both are proactive and energetic in their pursuit—the bull in relation to the cow and the *Pran* to the *Vaani*.

Even as the parents are not only responsible for producing an offspring but also provide for its care, upbringing, education and general welfare, the *Pran* and the

Vaani together help in nurturing and controlling the *Mana* of a creature. A young *calf* has a tendency to hop and skip around; it might canter away in various directions and land itself in danger if not controlled by the cow. This restlessness of the calf symbolises the restless nature of the mind or *Mana* of a creature. The wise parent uses the voice to keep control over his child, to teach the child and even admonish if it does mischief. Further, even as a hungry calf runs towards its mother cow when the latter bellows eagerly, eager disciples hungry for knowledge also rush towards their teachers who use their faculty of speech to teach them and satisfy their hunger for knowledge. Hence, the *Mana* (both the intellectual mind and the emotional heart) depends upon the voice and speech of a man for their guidance and help.

Refer Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse nos. 6-8; Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse nos. 4-8, 11, 18; Canto 1, Brahmin 6, verse no. 1; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 17; and Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 2.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 9

[This Brahmin describes the universal fire known as the ‘Vaishwanar Agni’ that is latently present in a man and helps him to digest the food eaten by him; its roaring sound is heard in his ears, and when he dies this fire extinguishes.]

1. This universal fire known as the ‘Vaishwanar Agni’¹ is inherently present in the Purush, i.e. in the man who is an image of the Viraat Purush who in turn is the macrocosmic gross form of the supreme Brahm. Whatever the man eats is digested in his body by this fire. When a man closes his ears (say with his fingers), the roaring and hissing sound of this raging fire inside his body is heard in his ears in the form of a muted roar called the ‘Naad’ which resembles the cosmic background sound present in the outer deep space of the cosmos². At the time when the Pran leaves the body (i.e. when the man dies and life begins to ebb away from his body), he does not hear this sound (1).

[Note—¹The *Vaishwanar Agni*—It appears first in Rig Veda--4/5, 6/7-9, 7/5-6, 13; and also in Yajur Veda—7/24, 18/72; and in Atharva Veda—6/119. It is the inherent ‘fire’ element present in all the living creatures that distinguish them from non-living creatures. It is all-pervading and omnipresent, and infuses life to all the creatures (Kaushatiki Brahmin, 4/3). This fire helps in digestion of food (Shatpath Brahmin, 148/10/1). There are three legendary fires—viz. the ‘Agni’, which is the terrestrial fire on earth represented by the word Bhu, the ‘Jatvedas’, which is the fire of the sky represented by the word Bhuvaha, and ‘Vaishwanar’, which is the fire of the heavens represented by the word Swaha (Brihaddevtakar, 1/67; 5/10). The term appears in the Rig Veda approx. sixty times and is more often than not synonymous with both life as well as the fire element.

²*Naad* is the cosmic sound which prevails in the vast recesses of the sky and is said to be heard by Yogis (ascetics) when they meditate. It gives them a sense of extreme ecstasy. This Naad is encrypted in the word OM. An entire Upanishad is dedicated to this Naad and it is called ‘Naad Bindu Upanishad’ which is part of the Rig Veda tradition and included as chapter no. 3 of the volume containing the Upanishads of the Rig Veda published in this series.

Also refer to Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 7; Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse no. 3; and Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no.5 in the context of this present Brahmin.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 10

[This Brahmin describes the path taken by a person after his death.]

1. When a Purush (literally a man but here referring to his true identity which is his Atma or his pure conscious soul which in turn is a microcosmic image of the macrocosmic Viraat Purush whose image the man is) dies and finds freedom from this mortal world, he first steps into the Vayu Loka (i.e. his vital winds escape from his body and merge with the air/wind element present outside his body in the open space of the sky).

Next, the Purush enters a tiny tunnel-like hole bored through the labyrinthine layers of the air/wind element. This hole is like the one present in the axle of a wheel through which the Purush (i.e. the Atma as a microscopic spirit) passes upwards. [Refer Canto 3, Brahmin 3, verse no. 2.]

The next halt is the abode of the Sun God (i.e. in the sky above the earth's gravitational pull and within the portals of the solar system). Here, the Sun stands as a guard to the next higher abode and it is not without his permission that the soul can go to the heavens above. So, for a noble Purush (Atma or soul or spirit), this Sun provides another passage that resembles the hole bored through the musical instrument known as 'Lambar' which is any instrument having a long gun barrel-like tunnel carved through it. The Purush passes through it to reach the next stoppage.

The next port of call is the abode of the Moon God. Here also the Moon provides him with a tunnel like passage, resembling the hole bored in the trumpet, through which the Purush moves ahead on his journey.

From there he reaches the abode known as 'Ashok' meaning the place where there are no mental torments and sorrows of any kind, and 'Ahim' meaning the place where there is no bodily torments of any kind. That is, he reaches the heaven of eternal peace and happiness, of beatitude and felicity. He lives there for infinite number of years (1).

[Note—(a) Refer also to Canto 3, Brahmin 2, verse nos. 11-13; Canto 3, Brahmin 3, verse no. 2; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 28; Canto 4 and its Brahmin 2, Brahmin 3, verse no. 36, and Brahmin 4, verse no. 3; Canto 6, Brahmin 2, verse nos. 2, 16 as well as Brahmin 11 of this Canto. (b) The process of death and the path taken by the creature has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition—3/17/6; 5/10/1-9; and 8/6/5. (c) Refer also to Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition—1/2-6.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 11

[This Brahmin is in continuation of the previous Brahmin and describes what happens upon death, and how a wise man treats all the attendant horrors of old-age related sickness etc. as a form of Tapa, or penance and penitence.]

11. A wise man of an enlightened mind—who regards the horrific mental and physical sufferings and torments that a sick man undergoes as a sure form of Tapa (or

penance and sufferance for atonement of his sins while still living in this body so that when the Atma finally leaves the body at the time of his death it can follow the path to eternal peace and happiness as described in Brahmin 10 above)—is able to literally conquer the Satya Loka or the abode of Truth. This is a metaphor for attaining access to the supreme form of spiritual realisation¹.

When the body of a dead person is taken to the forest (i.e. the lonely cremation ground away from human habitation), it is also a metaphoric form of Tapa (severe penance, austerity and sufferance). One who realises the import of this statement also is able to conquer the Satya Loka².

Finally, when the dead man (i.e. the dead body) is consigned to the fire (i.e. is cremated), it indeed is the highest form of Tapa for him. A wise person who knows the import of this is able to vanquish the Great Loka itself³ (1).

[Note--¹In other words, the sufferance of old age and its attendant sickness and other problems associated with the body and mind are a form of severe penance and penitence that purifies the soul just like gold is purified by putting it in fire and heating it. There are ascetics and hermits who voluntarily accept such sufferance and hardships as a means of severe penance called Tapa to cleanse their inner self of all spiritual impurities that ultimately paves the way for their spiritual elevation. When a wise man takes this view, his sufferance and torments become a form of penance and purification rite instead of being a source of miseries and horrors. He achieves exemplary calmness of mind and bears all his sufferings with steady fortitude and stoic tolerance. He never complains and moans about his misfortunes; rather he believes that he is preparing himself to embark upon the divine journey which is like a pilgrim to the abode of the supreme Lord in the Satya Loka.

This Satya Loka not only means the abode of Truth but also implies that a wise man realises that death is a 'dead certainty' or an 'irrefutable truth' that cannot be wished away, that cannot be denied, that cannot be simply be pushed under the carpet. There is a lesson in his suffering for those who watch him die—that they be warned that the same fate waits for them in due course of time. Stupid fellows might not pick up the hint, but wise ones would realise what they are up against and they start to amend their ways while there is still time.

²A wise man knows that after his death his body would be taken away from his household towards the forest. This journey is akin to his entering the third phase of life, called the 'Vaan Prastha', wherein a householder renounces all his worldly attachments and heads for the forest for doing voluntary Tapa and spending his time meditating and contemplating upon the supreme Truth. Unfortunately the man did not do so while he was alive so much was he engrossed in this world and fending for his family. He shivered at the thought of renouncing his wealth, his comforts and worldly pleasures, his obligations and collecting his dues, and family and kith and kin. Now he is taken by these same family members as if he is an unwanted burden which cannot be kept in the house any longer. This opens his eyes; more than him, it should open the eye of a wise man who observes the whole process. He realises that it is absolutely futile to remain hooked to this family and world, because there would be a time when he would be abandoned by those whom he regards as his own, that he would be ejected from his own house forcibly by them and he won't be able to even object. So beware! This profound realisation is enough to ignite renunciation in the heart of a wise man, and when he comes face to face with the great truth, it is deemed that he has reached the place where the ultimate Truth symbolically resides, i.e. the Satya Loka.

³Burning by fire is the surest and purest form of ascertaining the 'truth' about anything. When fire sacrifices are done, especially the animal sacrifices such as the Ashwamedh Yagya or the horse sacrifice, the sacrificial animal represents the person who does the sacrifice in a symbolic manner. Here the person has offered himself! What greater offering can be made to the Fire God? This is the ultimate sacrifice or

penance that the wise man can do—to offer his own self. This is the great truth that opens the eyes of wisdom of a keen observer. When one has burned himself, there is nothing left behind about which he can ever bother about; so what is the necessity for remaining plunged in this artificial and illusive, deluding and entrapping world? When this profound wisdom dawns upon the mental horizon of the enlightened man, he comes face to face with the ultimate truth—that this body is perishable and this world too is perishable. So what is the ‘great truth’, he asks himself. Has he died with the body; has he perished; has he been burnt in the cremation fire? No, he realises. Then what is that which does not perish, which does not suffer like the body, and which is the ‘truth’? The answer is his Atma which is pure consciousness, imperishable and eternal, and his undisputable ‘true self’. This Atma, he researches and finds out, is the manifestation of the supreme Truth of creation known as Brahm. Thus he is deemed to have reached the Satya Loka and conquered every Loka because Brahm is omnipresent and all-pervading. With this holistic and eclectic view, a wise and self-realised man becomes Truth personified.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 12

[This Brahmin asserts that the Anna, or the food eaten, as well as the Pran, or the vital winds present in the body, together are to be treated as manifestations of the astounding potentials and glory of Brahm.]

1. A sage named Pratriid discussed with his father the importance of food eaten by a creature and the Pran (vital winds) present in the body that lend it its vitality, vigour, strength and life as manifestations of Brahm. He said—‘Some people say that food is Brahm, i.e. food is the essence of life and the truthful source of all the magnificent qualities exhibited by it, such as vitality, vigour, strength and other essential benchmarks of vibrant and active life present in the otherwise inane, lifeless and gross body of a creature. But this proposition appears to be wrong and misconceived because without the presence of Pran inside the body, the food eaten would rot and decay.

There are some who treat Pran as a manifestation of Brahm, but this also appears to be an erroneous notion because life seems to wither away and ebb in the absence of food. [That is, without eating, the creature becomes too weak to move and do anything; it loses energy even to perform basic functions such as walking and talking even though the vital winds such as breath etc. function normally.]

But in my view both work together and in coordination to exhibit those majestic and stupendous qualities and powers that are manifestations of the divine and eclectic virtues and potentials possessed by the supreme Brahm. What good can I hope to do of a man who has realised this sublime truth, or what harm can I ever cause to him. He is indeed fulfilled and accomplished; nothing remains for him to acquire any more. [That is, it is not possible to either praise such a man nor does it matter if he is insulted because a truly realised man who knows what Brahm actually stands for remains unruffled and unwavering under any circumstances and provocations.]

His father interjected and stopped him. He said to his son—‘No son, don’t say this. Who can reach the supreme stature equivalent to Brahm-realisation by simply treating these two entities equally, and as being equivalent to Brahm¹?’

So, what is it? Then his father said—‘Verily, food is ‘Vi’, which is an acronym for food. It is in this ‘Vi’ that all the Bhuts (living beings of this creation consisting of the principal elements such as earth, fire, water, sky and air) find their support and cause of sustenance, it is in this ‘Vi’ representing food that all the living creatures are established and founded².

Likewise, ‘Ram’ (pronounced as ‘rum’ and having its seed in the monosyllable ‘Rang’) is the acronym for Pran. This is because it is due to this Pran that all the living beings move about³.

A person who is wise and erudite enough to understand the import of what is said here is considered strong and potent because he benefits from the glorious virtues of food as well as of Pran simultaneously. All the creatures seek his support (i.e. his guidance and advice because they treat him as learned and wise) even as the body seeks the support of the food eaten by it, and they roam around with him (i.e. they seek his communion and company, they wish to remain near him and do not want to abandon him) even as the body seeks the company of the vital winds called Pran at all times (because it just cannot survive without the Pran even for a moment)⁴ (1).

[Note--¹That is, if you do not understand the sublime and subtle meaning behind your own statement, then you have not understood the esoteric mystery behind Brahm as revealed in the form of these two entities. The reason is that food decays but both Pran and Brahm do not decay. So food is not the same as either Pran or Brahm. What is seen to wither and decay in the absence of the energy provided by the food is the gross body and not the Pran. When the body dies for lack of food, the Pran simply leaves the body and moves out to merge with the eternal air/wind element present outside the body.

Similarly, Pran cannot be food because food needs the support of so many other factors to become useful—first it needs air, water and soil to grow, and then it has to be cleaned with water and then cooked with fire. Fire and water are also needed for its digestion and assimilation in the body. On the contrary, the Pran, which is the vital wind present inside the body, is independent of any other element such as the earth (soil), water and fire to become effective. But at the same time it must be remembered that the Pran needs the support of the food to maintain the vitality, vigour, stamina, energy and strength of the body as is evident when a man fasts for a long period. He breathes and all his internal bodily functions that are governed by the different winds are performing normally, but he becomes too weak to move and do any physical work with the gross body externally. So the Pran, taken independently, too cannot be Brahm because Brahm does not depend upon any other entity for performance. In other words, these two entities—viz. the Pran and the Anna—represent some aspect of Brahm, but not the complete Brahm.

²This is because without *food* the creature would not get any nourishment; it is the food that provides it with all the energy that it needs to live and perform various deeds, including religious fire sacrifices that bestow him with divine and supernatural powers. The letter *Vi* is an acronym for being established in, finding support of or having support in, depending upon, relying upon something, to take the refuge of and find shelter in. In other words, all living creatures find their sustenance in food; without food life would be untenable because the creatures would not have any energy to do anything.

A similar narration occurs in Candogya Upanishad, Canto 6, section 7 of Sam Veda tradition which describes the importance of food.

³*Pran* is a synonym for life; it signifies something that is lively, strong, potent, active, vigorous and vibrant. Even food has Pran, and only that food which has life sustaining qualities inherent in it is worth eating, and not junk food as it is more harmful than being of any constructive use for the creature. It is Pran that enables the creature to move about and go places in search of food. The letter Ram, pronounced

as rum and having its seed in the letter *Rang* or *Ram*, is an acronym for something that moves and roams about. The wind or air element has a basic habit not to remain static, as compared to food which has no mobility of its own. So the difference is stark. See also Brahmin 13 below.

Incidentally, the encrypted letter 'rang' is the root for the divine name of Lord Ram. This letter is the Mantra of the Lord and it has great metaphysical importance. This is because it incorporates the entire gamut of creation in its three component syllables. The first syllable 'R' is indicative of the start of creation, the second letter 'A' indicates development and growth of what came into existence, and the third 'M or Ng' signifies conclusion.

⁴The food eaten by the body of the creature gives the latter its nourishment. Similarly, the advice given by a wise man acts as a source of moral and spiritual nourishment to those who listen to him. Again, the vital winds called Pran help the body to move about. Likewise, people who come in contact with such wise men are also moved or inspired by their august presence. Since food and vital winds are both equally important for the survival of the body, such wise people are needed in the society for its moral survival.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 13

[This Brahmin describes the exalted status of Pran and its worship in various divine forms.]

1. Pran is equivalent to 'Uktha'. So a wise, prudent and erudite worshipper should worship and adore Pran as a form of Uktha because it is the Uktha that lifts everyone¹. A person who worships Pran as Uktha produces offspring who are themselves personified Uktha². Further, such sagacious people who understand the eclectic and subtle values of Pran as Uktha are able to attain exalted and divine statures called 'Sayujya and Salokya'³ (1).

Note—¹The word *Uktha* refers to a symbolic weapon which is deemed most revered and important during certain sacrificial rituals. It is said to enhance the good effects of the entire ritual of the fire sacrifice which is equivalent to raising the stature of the patron. The word means to lift, to rise, to enhance, to uplift, to elevate. Pran is the only entity in the body, as its vital wind, that enables the gross body to physically rise and move around and perform so many great tasks. The Pran that accomplishes this stupendous feat is called Udaan. Similarly, breath infuses the most important spark of life in the body, and this breath is called the chief Pran. Other forms of chief vital winds such as Vyan and Samaan help in maintaining balance in the body, even distribution of nourishment, and coordination of organs and their working as a composite whole, and Apaana which not only helps to ingest food but also digest it and eliminate waste from the body—all have their own contribution in keeping the body in a healthy and active condition. In brief, all the various forms of Pran help the body to get up, to rise up and become a living entity instead of lying like a log of wood, showing no signs of life and therefore being useless for the rest of the creation.

Uktha also means the upliftment of the soul or Atma of the creature from the mundane to the spiritually exalted state of existence. This entails acquisition of knowledge and erudition as well as following it up with action that is in consonance and in conformity with this enlightenment.

Since the vital winds personified as a deity known as Pran is the chief amongst all the other deities representing the different organs of the body as clearly asserted in Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse no. 2-28; and Canto 6, Brahmin 1, verse no. 7-14 of this

Upanishad, it follows that by worshipping the Pran as symbolising the grand and magnificent virtues of Brahm that help to enhance the stature of those who are auspicious and wise from their current lowly existence to the higher state of existence, to raise the fallen and bring them up to the exalted stature befitting the noble heritage of their Atma which is pure consciousness, pristine and most exalted, the wise and self-realised creature is able to lift himself and become praise worthy just like the Pran which the enlightened creature worships as having the divine attributes of Brahm.

²When a person has this noble temperament and high level of intellectual development, naturally his *offspring* also imbibes these values from his parent, because a child learns what it sees around its immediate environs even before it attends formal school. These virtues get firmly ingrained in the child's psyche and when the child grows up, he would be an image of what his father stood for—i.e. would exemplify the noble virtues and grand characteristics so much worshipped and adored by his parent. The child would be influenced so much by the auspicious environment that as a man this same child becomes a wise, enlightened and exalted being. He becomes spiritually uplifted.

³The word *Sayujya* means a form of salvation when the worshipper becomes one like his chosen deity, while *Salokya* means to attain the divine abode of the chosen deity. Therefore, a wise and erudite person who is well-versed with the essential knowledge pertaining to the eclectic values of Pran is able to rise above the falsehoods and delusions associated with this gross body and treat it simply as a carrier of Pran representing Brahm. The pure consciousness residing in his bosom is his true identity and this Atma is also Brahm personified. Hence, when 'he', i.e. when his Atma leaves the body at the time of death, he (Atma in the form of the supreme spirit which is also a form of the invisible wind element) merges with the Pran (the various vital winds present in the body) to become one with it and escapes from the body imperceptibly and unnoticed; the Atma leaves the body as the 'last breath' of the man.

Now from here, where does he go? There are two paths that the spirit takes—for those who are truly realised, who have realised the profound truth about existence and the fundamental nature of its elements, i.e. those who are Brahm-realised, have nowhere to go for they understand that the Supreme Being is present everywhere in equal intensity, and therefore their Atma merges with the wind element or the cosmic Pran outside their body after they discard the gross body. This is tantamount to obtaining the 'Sayujya' form of emancipation and salvation and it is called 'Kaivalya Mukti' because it is the only one of its kind and leaves no alternative. On the other hand, those who are less wise and believe in the existence of heaven and rebirth take the path as described in Brahmin 10 of this Upanishad. This is 'Salokya' form of liberation from the bondage of the body and the world because in this case the spirit lives in the heaven where its patron deity resides.]

2. Pran should be worshipped, adored and honoured as 'Yaju' (a union, a conjunction; a form of great fire sacrifice). Pran is Yaju and that is why all the Bhuts (elements of creation as well as the visible manifestation of them in the form of the creatures of the living world) find their common meeting ground in this Pran¹. All the Bhuts are associated with it because of its exalted and superior status². Hence, those who are wise and erudite enough and worship and honour the Pran as a manifestation of this quality of Yaju present in the supreme transcendental Brahm are able to obtain the state of existence which is in consonance with and in accordance to this auspicious view held by that person, i.e. he achieves the stature called Sayujya and Salokya pertaining to the Pran as Yajur³ (2).

[Note—¹The word *Yaju* means the union of two entities; something that acts to join two things. Here it refers to the ability of Pran to keep the independent units of the

creation linked to each other by the means of a common denominator called 'life'. The independent elements of creation such as earth, fire, water, air and sky join hands to form this myriad and varied living world, thereby losing their independent identity and assuming a common identity known as the living being. This 'living' being has a body in which the vital winds live, and they 'coordinate' the functions of the various organs. In other words, the Pran acts as a coordinator which helps to 'join' apparently different elements into one single entity. Further, all living creatures interact with each other; no one can live in a cocooned world of his own, having nothing to do with others if he has to survive in this world marked by interdependence. So metaphorically the Pran acts to establish a union between two and more individuals for their individual as well as common benefit. Only living beings form a community for mutual benefit and not dead bodies—and Pran is an essential and key element in keeping the world alive. So Pran acts as the binding factor that links two individual entities with each other.

The proof of it lies in the fact that a man who loves his son most dearly while the latter is alive does not think of cremating him as soon as this son is dead. So the factor that linked the father and the son was not the body but the Pran or life factor present in the body of the son. The reverse is also true.

When a man dies, it is said that his 'Pran' has left his body. Even in cases where a single organ ceases to function, we say that that particular organ has lost its 'Pran' (life; consciousness). For example, if Pran leaves the left hand, it becomes limp and lifeless, while the rest of the body functions normally. In other words, this left hand, which is paralysed, has fallen apart, has literally been unhooked from the rest of the body. So, this Pran helps to keep all the organs and their vital functions coordinated and united in enabling the composite structure called the body to function properly. Pran, therefore, is like the common thread that keeps the beads of the rosary together, or holds the flowers of a garland together, and prevents their scattering around and the resultant dismantling of the rosary or the garland as the case may be. Here, the Pran holds the organs together for the creature's body.

When applied to the sacrificial ritual, the word 'Yaju' implies that this sacrifice establishes the union between the patron and the supreme deity whom he worships. That is why the word 'Yaju' is applied to the fire sacrifice where the hymns of the Yajur Veda are prominently used because this Veda is especially meant for the performance of fire sacrifices whose main aim is attaining liberation and deliverance for the soul, i.e. establishing a union between the soul of the patron and the cosmic Soul of the creation, which is Brahm. This Veda helps to establish a union, a link between the individual creature and his true 'self' known as the Atma, which in turn implies the union between the creature and the universal Brahm; or the union between the microcosm and the macrocosm.

²As has been pointed out in this Upanishad in Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse nos. 2-27 and Canto 6, Brahmin 1, verse no. 7-14, Pran is the best of all the forms that the elements in creation have taken. In the beginning each organ thought that it was superior to the other, just like one thinks that the path which he follows is the best path, but finally these organs accepted the superiority of Pran indicating that the wise man is one who accepts the superiority of Pran and treats it as a manifestation of the grandest virtues of the supreme transcendental Brahm. It is Pran that has the stupendous potentials to provide liberation and deliverance to all the other elements of creation from their bondages and fetters pertaining to this body as well as to the mundane world of artificiality and delusions. It follows that such exalted stature is attainable only by wisdom and erudition, and that is why only those who become aware of the divine and holy nature of Pran and realise that it symbolises the glorious virtues of the supreme transcendental Brahm are eligible for obtaining liberation and deliverance as well as obtaining an exalted stature occupied by Brahm in the form of the Pran.

³How a wise and erudite man attains *Sayujya* and *Salokya* forms of Mukti, i.e. liberation and deliverance of his soul has been described in note to verse no. 1 above.]

3. Pran should be worshipped, admired and honoured as ‘Sam’ personified. This is because all the creatures find an auspicious habitat and meeting ground in the Sam. Not only this, they find their glories established in the form of Sam; it represents their best of virtues and exalted stature¹. A person who worships Pran as Sam is able to attain a stature which is equivalent to the exalted stature occupied by Sam² (3).

[Note—¹The word *Sam* refers to the hymns of the Sam Veda which are considered the best forms of compositions and means of expression because they need experts who are not only well-versed in the intricacies of music but also in the art of linguistics and breath control to sing the hymns to perfection. They are very melodious and uplifting for the spirit. They are said to be possessed of divine qualities and eclectic virtues that provide liberation and deliverance to the tormented soul of the creature. The singing of devotional hymns needs the coordinated use of Vaani (voice) and Pran (or breath), and at the same time the Vaani and the Pran have to be of the purest form because these hymns are meant to honour the supreme Lord who can only be honoured with the best of gifts and tributes. Hence, in short, all that is the best and of the most exalted form in creation is regarded as being equivalent to Sam. Since Pran is the best form of all the elements and the most exalted amongst them, it is equivalent to Sam. Vaani, of course, is a vehicle for the Pran to express itself, to sing the hymns. The eclectic and sublime nature of Sam has been extolled and explained in detail in Chandogya Upanishad in its Canto 2 of the Sam Veda tradition. Also refer to Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse nos. 25-27 of this present Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad in this context.

²A person who has this holistic vision of Brahm as being present in Pran which is the vital wind, and Vak which is the faculty of speech without which no singing of hymns, or for that matter no teaching and learning of the Vedas was ever possible because they were traditionally orally taught and learned, is honoured in this world by everyone as a learned and wise one. He ensures that he uses his speech for noble causes and speaks only what is good and righteous and auspicious. He never uses the faculty of speech to tell a lie or speak ill of anyone. Naturally then his stature becomes as exalted and honourable as the supreme Brahm; he is revered and admired by all. By saying that he attains Sayujya and Salokya Lokas of Pran it means that he becomes synonymous with one who is most exalted and supreme in creation, i.e. with Brahm manifested as the Pran of the creation. He is looked upon by ordinary mortals with the same reverence that they reserve for the chief deity of creation, i.e. for Brahm. Such people virtually symbolise the ‘Pran’ of society; they keep it united and ordered; they strive for the society’s all round upliftment and welfare; they remain hidden from sight but nevertheless support the society from within it much like the subtle Pran supporting the gross body and regulating its functioning while remaining concealed from view.]

4. Pran is equivalent to a ‘Kshatra’ signifying strength and valour displayed by the Kshatriya class of people who were assigned the task of protecting the rest of the creation from being tyrannised by their brethren at the time of creation¹. That is why Pran is a synonym for Kshatra because the Pran gives protection to all the other forms of life in this creation. That is why Pran is called a Kshatriya amongst all other principal elements of creation².

Those who find no succour and solace from any other quarter, the Pran is their last refuge and shelter. Any person who understands the metaphysical and metaphorical import of this observation is able to attain the abode called Sayujya and Salokya pertaining to the Pran which is honoured with the title of a Kshatra³ (4).

[Note--¹See Canto 1, Brahmin 4, verse no. 11, 14 in this context. The word *Kshatra* refers to the ceremonial umbrella held on the head of a king signifying his majesty's noble birth and senior standing amongst the rest of the creation. 'Kshatra' is a symbol of the promise of giving of protection that one who is senior and able gives to him who is weak and lowly in the evolutionary hierarchy or standing in society. That is why kings who were regarded as the sole protectors of the rest of the creation were called Kshatriyas. That they became arrogant and haughty and usurped the right of self respect and dignity of the rest of their brethrens in creation and became ruthless and selfish was due to their own ignorance of their exalted stature, which led to their downfall later in history. That is also why large fire sacrifices were done only by them so that they could ask for divine intervention and seek supernatural intercession to empower them with greater physical and moral strength and powers so that they can carry their holy duty more effectively.

²This fact has been clearly stated in Canto 1, Brahmin 3 wherein the Gods had asked the various patron Gods of the different organs to sing the Udgith, the hymns of the Sam Veda, for them so that they can overcome their enemies the Demons. But as it so happened, none of them were successful. Finally success came when *Pran* did sing the hymns. Again there is an episode in Canto 6, Brahmin 1 that *Pran* proved its superiority over other forms of life represented by the consciousness present in the different organs of the body and all of them accepted its superior position amongst them. That is, in short, *Pran* was declared their king and protector of the Gods, bestowing upon the honour and title of a 'Kshatra'. Under the protection of the *Pran*, which is like an able and powerful Emperor, all other important posts of life and their patron Gods representing the independent Kings of those outer posts of the kingdom of the supreme Lord could maintain their dignity and posts. The result was that the creation was able to hold together and not disintegrate into individual units and fall apart. Hence, all other primary and secondary Gods have anointed *Pran* as their Emperor and live without any care under its benevolent protection. Being the Emperor, *Pran* serves all of them selflessly and treats them with equality and equanimity as asserted in the verses quoted above.

³It has been stated in verse no. 1 above that 'food' and 'Pran' are both manifestations of Brahman and they work in close coordination with each other, complementing and supplementing each other's efforts to reveal the stupendous glories and potentials of Brahman to create, sustain, nourish and propagate this creation. So this particular stanza refers to this aspect of *Pran*. In other words, all living creatures depend upon the energy and vitality provided by food to remain alive and active. But it is their *Pran* which enables them to absorb the nutrients from the food eaten and benefit from it. It is to uphold the symbolic promise made by *Pran* that granted the boon of life and accepted the request of the creature to live and remain healthy and active that this *Pran* enables the body to take in food and digest it, assimilate its nutrients and eliminate the waste. This is done by the different forms of the same vital wind called *Pran*, such as *Apaan*, *Samaan*, *Vyan* and *Udaan*.

A person who is wise realises the exalted stature of his *Pran* and does not fritter away his life in pursuing the falsehoods represented by this materialistic world of delusions and illusions that trap the creature and lead to its own ruin much like the mirage in a desert that a man pursues in the hope of finding water to quench his thirst, but pursuing the mirage leads to his ultimate death because there is no water in it. This realisation is tantamount to obtaining the stature of *Sayujya* when the enlightened man becomes one like his *Pran*, and *Salokya* when he attains the exalted stature similar to *Pran*. See also notes to earlier verse nos. 1-3 in this connection.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 14

[This Brahmin is unique in the sense that it enunciates the great metaphysical importance of 'Gayatri' as a manifestation of Brahm. This Gayatri is a type of poetical composition called a 'Gayatri Chanda' which is used to compose the sacred hymns of the Vedas. Amongst the different composition styles, this is regarded as the best style of Chanda in which the Vedas were revealed (Jaimini Brahmin, 2/227) because it has the divine virtue and supernatural mystical powers that provides protection to the Pran of the person who says the Gayatri Chanda and elevates his stature to that of the celestial Sun.

A Gayatri Chanda is a poetical composition consisting of three stanzas or lines each having eight letters or syllables. The total number of letters or syllables are thus twenty four. The Gayatri extolled by this Upanishad is the one strictly conforming to this rule, while the usual and commonly known Gayatri Mantra has four steps or stanzas and is called Anushtup Chanda.

This famous Mantra is dedicated to the Sun God who is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm. It is this Mantra—which is a group of ethereal words having profound spiritual value and metaphysical importance—which is being explained here. It is called Gayatri because it gave protection to the Pran (verse no. 4). It has been accepted as a manifestation of Pran in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/3/5/15, while it is praised as having the potentials of Agni (fire) present in the faculty of speech known as Vak in Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/2/9/3, as Tej (energy) in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/8/2/13, and as Brahm (the supreme transcendental consciousness) in Maitri Brahmin, 4/3/1. According to the Purans (mythological histories of the Hindus), the Gayatri has been praised having manifested in the form of the Trinity Gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder--Skanda Puran, Kashi Khand, Purva, 4/9/58. Whatever that exists is a revelation of Gayatri because it is a manifestation of Brahm—Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/1. In fact this whole earth that gives refuge to all the life forms in this world is a manifestation of Gayatri--Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/2. By worshipping it, a person is blessed with worldly assets such as abundant livestock and flourishing family, a long, healthy and active life, wealth and fortunes, good name and fame, as well as spiritual attainment in the form of Brahm realisation—Atharva Veda, 19/71/1.

The Gayatri Mantra has also been elucidated upon in other Upanishads, such as the Savitri Upanishad, the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 7, and the Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3, Section 12, verse nos. 1-9 belonging to the Sam Veda tradition. Besides these, the Gayatri Upanishad appears as eight assorted verses or Kandikas numbering 31-38 of the Gopath Brahmin belonging to the Atharva Veda.

It has been said in the scriptures that Brahmins, the highest class amongst the humans and who are regarded as the most learned and wise amongst them, were born from Gayatri, thereby drawing a parallel between the highest stature and exalted standing of Brahmins amongst the creatures and the Gayatri amongst the hymns.

It is pertinent to note here by the way that Kshatriyas, the warrior class, were born from the Chanda known as Trishtup, and Vaishya, the trading class, from the Chanda known as Jagati. In other words, the divine and eclectic powers encrypted in the Trishtup Chanda revealed themselves as the Kshatriya, and those of the Jagati as the Vaishya. The Trishtup Chanda has four lines each having eleven letters or syllables, totaling forty four letters or syllables in all, while the Jagati Chanda has six lines with eight letters or syllables each, totaling to forty eight letters or syllables.

In this Brahmin, Pran has been treated as a manifestation of the eclectic group of Mantras collectively called Gayatri which in turn elevate Pran to the stature of the

Sun God and of the supreme Brahm whose visible revelation the Sun God is. This Gayatri of three steps is therefore superior to other forms of the Gayatri Mantra having four steps because this three-stepped Mantra is synonymous with Pran, i.e. it is the life or the essence of all that exists.]

1. [This verse elucidates the metaphysical importance of the first step or stanza of Gayatri.] The first leg or step or stanza or word of the holy, divine and eclectic Mantra (hymn) known as Gayatri has eight letters or syllables¹ representing the three worlds known as 'Bhumi' (earth; the mortal world), 'Antariksha' (the sky above the surface of the earth), and 'Dyo' (representing the heavens).

This parallel is drawn in a symbolic manner as follows—the first Sanskrit word Bhumi has two letters, viz. Bhu + Mi. The second word Antariksha has four letters, viz. An + Ta + Ri + Ksha. The last word, i.e. Dyo, has two letters, viz. D + Yo. The total comes to eight ($2 + 4 + 2 = 8$). These eight letters stands for the first leg or step or stanza of the divine Gayatri.

Hence, these three worlds are covered symbolically by the first step of Gayatri. In other words, the first stanza of the divine Gayatri Mantra has the potential to bestow lordship over the three worlds which are 'under its foot', which is a figure of speech to imply that the entire visible and invisible worlds represented by the earth, sky and the heaven are under the command and control of the supreme Brahm who rules over them by utilizing the stupendous power of mystical energy that these eight letters generate in creation.

It naturally follows that a person who is wisened to this profound philosophical meaning of the first step of Gayatri is symbolically able to vanquish and exercise control over all the creatures, the Bhuts and the Gods. In other words, he becomes most honoured and revered in the world and attains a position equivalent to that possessed by Brahm. In other words, since the first step of the Gayatri symbolically covers all the three worlds, it implies that a person who pronounces the first stanza or word of the famous Gayatri Mantra (or one who worships the Gayatri Mantra with this holistic view) is deemed to have conquered and established his supremacy over the three worlds at one go (1).

[Note—¹The first word or step of the famous Gayatri Mantra is—Tatsaviturvarnyam.
]

2. The second step or stanza of the Gayatri also has eight letters¹. These represent the 'Richa' symbolising the hymns of the Rig Veda, 'Yanjushi' symbolising the hymns of the Yajur Veda, and 'Samani' indicating the hymns of the Sam Veda.

This parallel is drawn in a symbolic manner as follows—the first Sanskrit word Richa has two letters, viz. Ri + Cha. The second word Yanjushi has three letters, viz. Yan + Ju + Shi. The last word, i.e. Samani, has three letters, viz. Sa + Ma + Ni. The total comes to eight ($2 + 3 + 3 = 8$). These eight letters stands for the second leg or step or stanza of the divine Gayatri.

In other words, the second step of the Gayatri symbolically covers all the three primary Vedas, and it implies that a person who pronounces this second stanza or word of the famous Gayatri Mantra (or one who worships the Gayatri Mantra with this holistic view) is deemed to have recited all the Vedas at one go and therefore reaps the benefits that come with such reading of the scriptures (2).

[Note—¹The second word or step of the Gayatri Mantra is—Dhimahi.]

3. The third step or stanza of the Gayatri also has eight letters¹. These represent the 'Pran' symbolising the vital wind called breath that injects life in the body of the creature, 'Apaan' symbolising the vital wind which helps the body to take in food, digest it, extract nutrition from it and eliminate waste from the body, and 'Vyan' indicating the vital wind which is evenly distributed in the body.

This parallel is drawn in a symbolic manner as follows—the first word Pran has two letters, viz. Pra + Na. The second word Apaana has three letters, viz. A + Pa + Na. The last word, i.e. Vyan, has three letters, viz. Vi + Ya + Na. The total comes to eight ($2 + 3 + 3 = 8$). These eight letters stand for the third leg or step or stanza of the divine Gayatri.

In other words, the third step of the Gayatri symbolically covers all the three primary vital winds that regulate the functioning of all the organs of the body of the creature. It implies that a person who pronounces this third stanza or word of the famous Gayatri Mantra (or one who worships the Gayatri Mantra) is deemed to have acquired the powers that help him to establish his control and command over all the living beings in this creation just like the winds do at the subtle level.

The fourth step or leg or stanza of the Gayatri² is called Turiya. It is illuminated, splendorous, radiant and brilliant like the Sun. It is evident and clearly visible like this glorious Sun. It is beyond the reach of the entire mortal world and shines above them like a lamp, thereby providing light and illumination to the entire realm. Hence it is called 'Turiya' which is the fourth state of consciousness of the creature when it rises above the mundane and obtains the exalted and glorified status of Brahm-realisation which bestows one with eternal beatitude and felicity.

It implies that a person who pronounces this fourth stanza or words of the famous Gayatri Mantra (or one who worships the Gayatri Mantra with this holistic view) is deemed to have acquired the sublime powers which are equivalent to that of the celestial Sun. It helps to establish his fame and glory in this world just like the Sun shines splendidly in the sky and lends its brilliant light to all the corners of the world (3).

[Note—¹The third stanza of the Gayatri Mantra is—Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat.

²The fourth step or stanza of the Gayatri Mantra is—Paro Rajase Savadoma. This is not a part of the actual Mantra in the correct and proper sense but is meant to establish the glory and fame of this Mantra as being equivalent to the magnificence and majesty of the celestial Sun. It is in the form of an honour bestowed upon the Gayatri and is like the jewel in the crown. It salutes the stupendous glories and astounding potentials of Gayatri by establishing that it is a manifestation of Pran and Sun, and therefore is empowered with the grand virtues of both.

Each of these four steps of the Gayatri Mantra stand for the four stages in which the pure consciousness of a creature exists. These four stages are—waking, dreaming, deep sleeping and Turiya which is the last stage. It is in this state that one finds eternal bliss that is tantamount to Brahm realisation.]

4. The supreme Gayatri is best represented by this glorious and radiant fourth step or leg. That is, it is established in the fourth state of existence of consciousness that is worthy of adoration and praise. This step is founded upon truth; it is established in truth; it is rooted in truth. And truth has its foundation and root in the eye; it is established in the eye. It is the 'eye' that lends something with the virtues of irrefutable veracity, irrevocable trust and reliability, and unequivocal truthfulness; it is the eye that stands witness to something that is the ultimate and unchallengeable truth which cannot be denied, something that is valid.

That is why when there is a dispute between two people, one saying that he has ‘heard’ something and the other says that he has ‘seen’ something, then we would believe the person who says that he ‘has seen something himself with his own eyes’. The other person is dismissed as hearsay or rumor monger.

Thus, truth is established in strength; it is vigorous; it is potent and powerful. That is, truth has these glorious virtues. Anyone who speaks the truth has an inherent strength in his statements; his words stand the most rigorous of tests.

Since sublimity, strength and vigour are the chief attributes of Pran, it follows that truth is established in Pran. Or Pran lends truth its vitality, its energy, its magnificent powers and its potential strength. Therefore, Pran is more powerful than the virtue of ‘truth’. [Since Pran is the most exalted and noble form of the essential elements in creation, it is definitely superior to truth because only a living being who has life in him is able to speak the truth, and not a dead person. Only a person who is selfless, fearless and beyond mundane considerations, who is wise and enlightened, who knows the inherent strength in truth and the weakness of falsehood would speak the truth. So to make any truth effective and be highlighted, Pran is an essential requirement.]

With this natural progression we conclude that the best and the strongest Mantra known as Gayatri is established in the Pran because its glory can be borne by Pran and nothing else. Therefore, just like the Pran is most revered amongst the elements and sublime Gods, this Gayatri is also revered and honoured, adored and worshipped in this world. Even as all the Gods and all the creatures praise Pran and depend upon its mercy, everyone depends upon the eclectic and divine Gayatri for their survival and protection. [In this context it is relevant to say that this Mantra is offered to the Sun and obviously the Sun is the great sustainer of creation.]

This Gayatri has provided liberation and deliverance as well as protection from torments to the ‘Gaya’. These Gayas are the various Prans in the form of the basic driving force that lives inside the different sense organs of the body representing the life present in each of them as their sense of awareness, the ability to carry on with their specific functions, the vitality and energy that they possess that keeps them alive, etc. It is because of this subtle fact that these divine, sublime and ethereal words known as the sacred hymns of the Vedas are called by this name of ‘Gayatri’¹.

All the disciples of a wise teacher who are taught the significance and profound truth about Gayatri by them are definitely provided with succour and refuge by this holy and divine Mantra called Gayatri. All the disciples enjoy the benefit attendant with such ethereal knowledge (4).

[Note--¹They are called *Gaya* because these organs make a lot of noise and remain ever active, never resting or literally remaining ‘quiet’. Further, the word *Gaya* means one that ‘goes’; since the organs tend to move towards their respective objects, such as the nose that moves towards pleasant smell, the eyes towards attractive sights, the ears towards charming sounds, and the tongue towards delicious tastes. The Gayatri Mantra gives a man that bliss and happiness which is superior to the one obtained by pursuing the objects of comfort and pleasures that are available in this world. As a result, once the creature tastes this supreme nectar of bliss and happiness, its sense organs would not tend to rush towards this world to seek their gratifications.

Since the hymns of the Vedas have special spiritual powers and a wise man can utilise his erudition and learning to properly interpret them for his spiritual upliftment, they symbolically provide liberation to the man from all his worldly miseries and torments by giving peace to his tormented soul. Therefore, one that gives liberation and provides succour to the Prans characterised by the virtue of

‘Gaya’, or movement away from the truth and towards falsehood, i.e. one which gives ‘Traan’ from misfortunes and pains, is called *Gayatri*.

It must be especially noted here that this fourth step of leg of the Gayatri Mantra does not consist of any word which is a part of the main Mantra, but is only meant to establish its divine stature as the citadel for all spiritual Mantras; it is intended to give this Gayatri its place of honour in the pantheon of divine Mantras. Besides this, the fourth leg is visualised as a symbol of stability because anything that has four legs is more stable and steady as compared to one with only three.

Therefore, the last stanza is like an epithet highlighting the magnificent divinity and spiritual value of the Gayatri Mantra. It is akin to the *Sun* shining in the sky, and all other planets and their satellites, such as the moon, shine because they reflect this light from their surface. The Sun is at the centre of the solar system even as the Gayatri is at the symbolic hub of all divinity and spiritually-empowered Mantras. It is also akin to the *Pran* which supports life in a gross body of a creature and is an acronym for life as a whole. The Pran symbolically illuminates the dark realm of the body from the inside while the Sun does the same from the outside.

The actual Gayatri Mantra that should be preached to the spiritual aspirant consists of the first three steps as described in verse nos. 1-3. This fact is specifically clarified in the next verse.

Therefore, the Gayatri Mantra consisting of three lines as proclaimed, elucidated and espoused in this Brahmin is the following—“Tatsaviturvaryam Dhimahi Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat”. The last line which honours and glorifies this Gayatri is “Paro Rajase Savadoma” as described above.]

5. Some wise teachers insist of preaching the Gayatri based on the composition style called ‘Anushtup Chanda’. Their contention is that since ‘Vak’ or the faculty of speech is at the core of recitation of any Mantra, or for that matter any Veda or any other scripture which are embodiments of knowledge, and that this knowledge is personified as a Goddess known as Saraswati residing in this faculty, and the Anushtup Chanda is a medium by which the faculty of speech reveals this eclectic, divine and ethereal knowledge pertaining to the Supreme Being (i.e. Brahm), it follows that they are actually preaching that supreme entity through this medium of Anushtup Savitri Mantra (or the Gayatri Mantra composed in the style of a Anushtup Chanda)¹.

But according to other senior teachers this is wrong and should not be done. Hence, the Gayatri Mantra composed strictly according to the poetical style called ‘Gayatri Chanda’ should be regarded as the proper Mantra (as described in this Brahmin)².

A wise person who realises the spiritual significance and eclectic importance of the truthful Gayatri need not hoard worldly assets because he knows that all the accumulated worldly assets are no match for even one step or leg or stanza of the divine Gayatri⁴ (5).

[Note—¹The word *Savitri* refers to the glorious rays of the brilliantly shining Sun that illuminates all the corners of the world. The divine knowledge pertaining to the Supreme Being or Brahm manifested as the subtle Pran or life of this creation, as the visible celestial Sun that illuminates and takes care of this creation by providing it with light, heat and energy essential for survival, well being and growth, and as all the other factors that are harbingers of life in this creation, have been embodied as the Gayatri, while the visible world and the stupendous forces and magnificent powers that energise this world are Savitri. Again, Saraswati is the Goddess of speech and of knowledge that this speech propounds and proclaims, because it is with this faculty that one is able to teach others and disseminate information on a wide scale. In other words, Saraswati resembles Savitri because even as the latter spreads the glory of the

Sun in the form of its brilliant light even to the farthest of corners of the visible world, the goddess Saraswati reveals the glory of Brahm in the form of the knowledge of the scriptures expressed through the faculty of speech called Vak.

The *Anushtup Chanda* is a composition having four lines each having eight letters or syllables, bringing the total number of letters or syllables to thirty two— $8 + 8 + 8 + 8 = 32$.

²The *Gayatri Chanda* is a poetical style of composition of the hymns of the Vedas wherein each verse has three lines and each line has eight letters or syllables, bringing the total number of letters/syllables to twenty four— $8 + 8 + 8 = 24$. This form of Gayatri has been regarded as being equivalent to the chief 'Pran' which the life infusing vital wind called breath without which life is simply not tenable, and which is the most superior form of all the Prans representing all other vital winds that reveal themselves as various functions of the various organs of the gross body, which in turn is a microcosm of the vast creation, and keep it going smoothly. But if there was no life injecting breath in the body, the latter suffocates to death and then what good would be the organs for the creature? So this Gayatri Mantra is like this Pran, and the Sun which symbolises the stupendous potentials of Brahm to nourish life and even conclude it when deemed necessary as is evident from the fact that the very Sun which is a harbinger of life is also a messenger of death when it beats down relentlessly upon the earth during scorching summers and when there is a drought.

⁴A wise man need not be told that the Gayatri is a manifestation of the supreme Brahm and its astounding and majestic potentials and glories. A wise man knows that the worldly assets that he wishes to accumulate are all perishable and would not last him long. He also understands that it is his Pran in the form of his pure consciousness that is the most divine and supreme asset in this creation because it is an image of the supreme Brahm, that the Vak or the faculty of speech that he possesses is a revelation of Savitri, the radiance and brilliance of the light of the brightly illuminated Sun in the sky symbolising the stupendous powers and potentials of knowledge because light is a metaphor for erudition, sagacity, wisdom and enlightenment, that this knowledge is manifested as this faculty and its patron Goddess is Saraswati who is a personification of Savitri, that Brahm is the only truth and eternal entity while the rest of the world is non-eternal and perishable, and that it is stupid to fritter away and neglect such divine, everlasting and majestic assets and yearn for perishable, non-eternal and mortal assets of the world. He further realises that the Atma present in his own bosom is a manifestation of Gayatri because Pran and Atma and Brahm as well as truth and knowledge are all truthful, divine and eternal entities synonymous with each other. They are the most precious assets of creation, and he has them in abundance, so it is not only futile but downright stupid to collect worldly perishable assets.

****The Gayatri composed according to the Anushtup Chanda style is the following--**'OM BHURBHUVAHA SVAHA¹, TATSAVIURVARENYAM², BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAH³, DHIYO YO NAH PRACODAYAT⁴'. It means 'OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial, the celestial and heavenly worlds. That Brahm is luminous like the sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble path'. The four phrases of the Gayatri Mantra are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).

There are 24 Rishis of Gayatri Mantra. They are the following—Vamdev, Atri, Vashistha, Shukra, Kanva, Parashar, Vishwamitra, Kapil, Shaunk, Yagyawalkya, Bharadwaj, Jamdagni, Gautam, Mudgal, Veda

Vyas, Lomas, Agstya, Kaushik, Vatsa, Pulastya, Manduka, Durvasa, Narad and Kshyap.

The 24 Chandas (metres) of Gayatri Mantra are the following— Gayatri, Ushnik, Anushtup, Vrihati, Pankti, Trishtup, Jagati, Ati Jagati, Shakvari, Ati Shakvari, Dhriti, Ati Dhriti, Viraat, Prastarapankti, Kriti, Prakriti, Akriti, Vikriti, Sankriti, Aksarapankti, Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha and Jyotismati.

There are 24 Devtas (Gods or patron deities) of Gayatri Mantra. They are the following— Aagneya, Prajapati, Saumyam, Ish, Savitri, Aditya, Bhrishapti, Maitravarun, Bhagdaivatya, Aryamaishvar, Ganesh, Twastra, Paushna, Indra, Vayu, Vamdeo, Maitra Varunidaiv, Vaishvadev, Matrik, Vaishnav, Vasu Dev, Rudra Dev, Kuber and Ashwini.

The 24 Shaktis (divine powers or the female aspects of creation) of Gayatri Mantra are the following— Vaamdevi, Priya, Satya, Vishva, Bhadravilasini, Prabhawati, Jaya, Santa, Kanthaa, Durga, Saraswati, Vidruma, Vishlesa, Vyapini, Vimla, Tamopaharini, Sukhma, Vishwa-yoni, Jaya-vasa, Padmalya, Paraa, Sobha, Bhadra and Tripada.

The 24 Varnas (colours or shades) of Gayatri Mantra are the following — Campakam (yellow), Atasi (hemp), Vidrum (coral), Sphatik (crystal), Padam (lotus), Tarun-aditya (rising sun-red), a mixture of Shankha (conch), Kunda (white jasmine) and Indu (moon), Pravaal Padma (red-lotus), Padmaraga (emerald), Indranilamani (sapphire), Mukta (pearl), Kumkum (red power), Anjam (collyrium-black), Rakta (blood red), Vaidurya, Ksaudra (champa; yellow), Haldi (turmeric yellow), Kunda Dugdha (white as jasmine), Ravikanthi (sun-white), Shukpuccha (a tail of a parrot), Shat-patra (white lotus), Ketaki (light yellow), Mallika and Karavira.

The 24 Tattvas (essence, elements) of Gayatri Mantra are the following— earth, water, fire, air, space (called the 5 Mahabhuts), smell, taste, vision, sound, touch (called the 5 Tanmatras), generative organ, excretory organ, feet, hand, mouth (called 5 organs of action), nose, tongue, eyes, skin, ear (called 5 organs of perception), Pran, Apan, Vyan and Saman (called vital airs).

The 24 Mudras (postures) of Gayatri Mantra are the following— Sumukham and Samputam, Vitatam and Vistrutam, Dwimukham and Trimukham, Chaturmukham and Panchmukham, Sanmukham, Adhomukham, Vyapakanajalikam, Shakatam, Yampasham, Sanmukho-mukham, Vilambam, Mustikam (closed fist), Matsyam (fish like), Kurmam (tortoise), Varahakam (boar like), Singhkrantham (lion like), Mahakrantham (a great lion like), Mudgar (Pelion like), Pallavam, Trishulyoni (trident like), Surabhi (cow like), Akshamala, Lingakam (phallus like) and Ambujam (blue lotus).]

6. [The greatness of this Gayatri, its uniqueness as well as its stupendous spiritual value and matchless metaphysical preciousness are extolled in this verse in symbolic terms.] The opulence, wealth, grandeur, magnificence and stateliness of the three worlds (i.e. the mortal world or the terrestrial world, the celestial world and the heavenly world) that a person (especially a Brahmin) acquires as a gift or largesse (as obtained by learned Brahmins during fire sacrifices) are equivalent to the worship of the first leg or step of this Gayatri¹.

Similarly, the divine benefits obtained by accepting the gift of knowledge contained in the three Vedas, called the Trividya, is equivalent to the eclectic benefits obtained by worshipping the second leg or line of the Gayatri Mantra².

The benefit of gaining lordship over all the creatures of this world is like worshipping the third leg or line of the Gayatri³.

Finally, the fourth leg or step shines above all like the celestial Sun which is visible and splendorous. It is superior to all that exists in this mortal creation and is most honourable and adorable. It cannot be compared to any kind of largesse and gifts⁴ (6).

[Note--¹That is, the eclectic and divine benefits obtained by paying obeisance to the supreme Lord and offering prayers to him by the means of the first line of the Gayatri Mantra is equivalent to the combined benefits accruing from all the worldly assets put together. When the most benevolent and favourable Emperor's (i.e. Brahm's) intercession is requested by means of the first line of the all-powerful instrument called the Gayatri Mantra, then why should a seeker plead with lesser kings? The first line of the Mantra stands for the three worlds as described in verse no. 1 above. Its blessings bestow Lordship over these worlds.

²Refer verse no. 2 in this context. The knowledge contained in the first three primary Vedas—Rig, Yajur and Sam—is regarded as the Trividya. Tri means three, while Vidya refers to knowledge.

³Refer verse no. 3 in this context. The third line represents the three vital winds of creation, and these three winds are the lifelines of all the living beings. A person who controls this lifeline controls all the creatures just like the horses of a chariot can be controlled by the rein. A charioteer who can properly harness the horses and keep them on track is regarded as an expert charioteer. Likewise, a man who can exercise control over his vital winds through various meditation techniques is called an expert Yogi or ascetic who has been able to harness the divine energy unleashed by the means of meditation in which not only the vital winds are controlled but which uses the Gayatri Mantra for the purpose of doing Japa (repetition of Mantras) to effect concentration as required during meditation. Subjugating the creatures is a metaphor for controlling the sense organs because these organs are like the horses that pull the body towards the sense objects of the world.

⁴Refer verse no. 3 in this context. This is indicative of the fourth state of consciousness marked by perpetual beatitude and felicity. Obviously, no material thing in the entire world, no amount of knowledge, and no meditation is comparable to this supreme state of the mind when true bliss is obtained, and this is the state representing Brahm-realisation. After all, why does a man do so many religious ceremonies, why will he ceaselessly pursue the objects of the material world, and why would he slog for acquisition of knowledge if he is not able to get peace, happiness and bliss from them, if he is not able to benefit from them? Surely and certainly the main aim of such enterprise is to gain comfort and peace for the self. But all these pursuits give temporary comfort and peace, for permanence is possible only when the result of any endeavour is permanent. This permanence is obtainable by pursuing the 'truth', and that is without doubt the Brahm. The readily available means of accessing this 'truth' in the form of Brahm is the Gayatri Mantra, and its three legs or lines are like the three steps leading to the citadel where that 'truth' is enshrined. That is why the Sun is used as a visible symbol of that truth—it is to emphasise the point that the 'truth' is as splendorous and radiant, as potent and powerful, as magnificent and brilliant as this Sun. Anything can be denied, but the presence of the Sun cannot be wished away.]

7. Now, this verse describes the prayer for worshipping the Gayatri—'Oh Gayatri! All the three worlds represent your first leg (refer verse no. 1). The entire body knowledge encrypted in the three Vedas stand for your second leg (refer verse no. 2). The third leg of yours corresponds to the three vital winds (Pran, Apaana and Vyan—refer verse no. 3). And the Turiya state of existence denote your fourth leg (refer verse no. 3).

In fact, you are beyond the four states of existences symbolised by these four legs because it is not possible to comprehend and grasp you and your astounding sublimity and divinity by any known means. You are beyond the states that have any kind of attributes, qualities and characteristics, for you are inexplicable and mystical as you are without any physical attributes, qualities and characteristics which can be defined or even visualised. We reverentially bow before your such an exalted and supreme stature called the 'Turiya state' which is like a citadel of divinity and holiness situated above all the known Lokas (worlds or habitats of the different Gods), and which is shining brilliantly with its own illumination.

Bless us that the enemies in the form of various misdeeds, misdemeanors, sins, evils and perversions do not cast their evil eyes upon us and desist from their nefarious designs, creating endless mischief and nuisance for us'.

The prayer should be concluded by saying, 'Let them not be successful in their intentions'.

Another alternative way to conclude the prayer is this—'Let me achieve my goals; or let me attain success in my such and such endeavour' (7).

8. [This verse cites an anecdote to highlight the astounding powers of the Gayatri Mantra and to serve as a warning as well.] Once, king Videha (i.e. Janak, the ruler of Videha Nagar or Janakpur—refer Canto 3, Brahmin 1; Canto 4, Brahmin 1) had asked one Budil Aashwatraashi that the latter had proclaimed himself as an expert of this Gayatri in his previous life, then why did he become an elephant and carry burden (because such persons are expected to attain liberation from all bondages and therefore there was no question of their becoming a beast of burden).

At this, he replied, 'Oh King! I was not aware of the symbolic mouth of this great power known as Gayatri'.

Then Videha advised him as follows—'Fire is its mouth'¹. Even as anything put in a raging fire gets reduced to ashes, a person who realises the stupendous potentials of Gayatri to burn, i.e. to eliminate, vanquish and banish for good the unfortunate consequences of all his sins, misdeeds, misdemeanors and evils, is able to overcome the negative effects of any inauspicious and unrighteous deed he might have done willingly or unwillingly in the course of his life. Thus, he is able to become purified, cleansed, auspicious and holy as if all his deeds were of the correct manner or that he has sufficiently repented for them and atoned himself to become eligible to attain the elevated stature of those who are righteous, auspicious, pious and holy. Such a man therefore becomes free from the effects of death and decay, from old age and its decrepiting consequences (8).

[Note—¹The next Brahmin describes this 'fire-like mouth' of Gayatri.]

Canto 5, Brahmin 15

[This Brahmin describes the Sun as the visible symbol of the magnificent glory of Gayatri. The Sun is envisioned as a golden pot full of the fire element radiating out from it and spreading in all the directions of the world. The Supreme Being has revealed himself as the Sun and as the Atma of the devotee who worships the Sun as a manifestation of the supreme Divinity. The two primary elements of creation, Tej or energy in the form of the Fire God, and the life-giving wind or air element in the form of Pran are offered respect here.]

The mouth of the truthful supreme Brahm is covered by a golden pot which is radiant and splendid. Oh the Sun God who is the sustainer and nourisher of the living world! Be gracious and kind enough to remove that veil or covering from the mouth of Truth so that I can be blessed for having a fortunate chance to have its divine vision, a rare glimpse of that eclectic divine entity represented by that Truth.

Oh Yam (the controller of creation by the virtue of his being the God of death), Oh Surya (the brilliant Sun God personifying Brahm), Oh Prajapati (the guardian of the living world)! Please reduce the blinding dazzle of your rays so that I can have a glimpse or a divine sight of that esoteric, enigmatic, most sublime and most divine form of yours which is auspicious, invigorating and holy.

Indeed, the supreme Purush, i.e. the transcendental Lord who is manifested in the brilliant Sun is no one but 'I'. So let the various vital winds present inside my gross body and which are called my life giving Pran break free from the bondages of this body and escape outside to merge and become one with the cosmic wind/air element that is free from any bondage and is infinite, eternal, omnipresent and all-pervading in the cosmos. [It should be noted here that a reference is being made to the solar wind that blows in the solar system. It shows that this Upanishadic seer has knowledge of astrophysics also.]

Similarly, let the body relinquish its independent existence and coalesce with the earth element of creation. When this happens, the pure conscious Atma located in the body, and which Atma is my true self, is freed from the imprisoning walls of the prison-like gross body as well as the fetters symbolised by the Prans that shackle this Atma to that body. I hereby offer my liberated Atma to you (i.e. to the Supreme Being) as my greatest oblation and offering for you.

Oh the creator and sustainer of the entire creation who has manifested himself, inter alia, as OM (i.e. as the cosmic eternal divine Being known by the name of OM) and as 'Kratu' (i.e. a doer of deeds; here referring to the Atma which resides in the body and does all deeds in this world). Salutations to you! Remember me and the deeds that I have done (i.e. take care of me and free me from the horrendous effects of deeds done by me in this world while I lived in this gross body).

Oh Fire God! Show me and lead me on the correct and auspicious path which is compatible, comfortable and pleasant for me and which takes me to the destination where I can enjoy the rewards of my deeds. Oh Lord! You are aware of all the deeds done by me. So please be gracious, kind, compassionate, benevolent and magnanimous enough to eliminate and destroy my evil deeds and their horrible consequences. I bow before you repeatedly' (1).

[Note—Here the *Fire God* as a manifestation of the supreme Truth is being honoured in the symbol of the celestial *Sun* because the latter is the cosmic cauldron where the eternal cosmic fire is visibly present. The Sun is also worshipped as a God, the Sun God, because it represents the most glorious visible manifestation of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. This Brahm is called 'Purush' in this context because it lives inside the Sun, with the latter's physical appearance as the Brahm's body. The prayer in the 1st stanza is to request this Brahm to sufficiently enlighten the worshipper so that he can have that kind of sight which can enable him to see past the dazzle of the Sun's blinding disc and glimpse the secret divine Being residing in it. This is a symbolic way of asking the Lord to make the artificial external material world, lighted by the Sun's light, appear dark so that the spiritual aspirant can turn inwards and have a vision of the secret Purush (i.e. the conscious Atma) residing in his bosom. This phrase 'remove the veil' alludes to the removal of the veil of ignorance and delusions that has mired the spiritual growth of the aspirant by covering his eyes of wisdom with a veil representing the dazzle and blinding charm of the material

sense objects of this attractive but false world. That is why the *Yam God* is also invoked here, because the word ‘Yam’ means self-restraint. This virtue of self-restraint is expediently needed for Brahm-realisation. This Sun God is also called *Prajapati* because the Sun nourishes and sustains life in this world.

The *mouth* is said to be the abode of the Fire God as he resides in the faculty of speech called Vani or Vak, and in the Pran or the vital wind present in the nostrils and the mouth as inhaled and exhaled breath. In mythology, the Fire God has been depicted as having tongues of flame leaping out from his wide open mouth. Speech is the most vivid manifestation of what is known as *truth*, and its habitat is the mouth because we use the mouth to speak anything, including the ‘truth’.

The vision of the *Sun* as a brightly lit pot covering the mouth of the fiery ‘truth’ alludes to this view of the Fire God. When we cover the lighted wick of a lamp with a translucent cover such as found in a decorative lantern, the entire glass cover glows with the light of the wick but the wick is not visible separately. The covering glass has no light of its own but it appears that it does so because it glows uniformly as if giving out its own effervescent light. Only wise persons know about the truth. The same thing is imagined here—the Sun glows with the light of the fire radiating out from the ‘truth’ symbolically enclosed by it. Truth is compared to fire because the ‘truth’ has the magnificent ability to burn all that is false and deceptive. Light has this inherent quality that it trounces darkness—i.e. the symbolic light of wisdom and erudition emanating from truthful knowledge is able to dispel darkness of ignorance and delusions. The ‘Truth’ here refers to the supreme Brahm.

Truthful knowledge has the potential to remove and eliminate for good all forms of ignorance. Since ‘truth’ is as powerful as the ‘fire’, it follows that truthful realisation of the self as the *Atma*—which is a microcosmic manifestation of the same supreme *Brahm* who has revealed himself as the brightly shining and splendid Sun in the sky, and therefore is also a symbolic Sun residing in the body of the spiritual aspirant—is able to eliminate the darkness of ignorance and remove all misconceptions about the Atma as having been involved in doing deeds, because it is not the Atma but the gross body that had been doing them. Aside of this, the Atma is also a symbol of the fire element at the microcosmic level of the aspirant even as the Sun is at the celestial level because ‘fire’ is a metaphor for dynamic energy and vitality. So the wise aspirant is able to burn all his misdeeds and misconceptions when he becomes enlightened about the stupendous potentials of his true self, the Atma.

When the wise aspirant hopes and prays to discard the *body* and symbolically throws it away to decay and disintegrate into the fundamental earth element from which the body was crafted by the creator, he is deemed to have freed his self from this prison. But it may be argued that Atma is eternally free, so then what had kept it tied to the body? The answer is the *Pran* which are the various vital winds that keep the body alive, and therefore trapped inside the walls of the body. As long the prison walls are not broken, the prisoner-like Atma cannot escape.

An escaping prisoner who is wise and intelligent ensures that he does not leave behind a trail so he can be traced and captured again. So this fleeing Atma burns the body (burns the prison walls before fleeing) and releases the vital winds (snaps the chains that had been shackling him to the walls of the cell). He even prays to his well wishers and mentors outside to ensure his safe passage and wipe off his footsteps and fingerprints. Once freed, he vows not repeat his mistakes so that he has not to undergo the tribulations once again. In the present context, this is denoted by the aspirant seeking the Fire God to destroy his sins and misdeeds and pave a safe path for him to the place where he can live in peace and comfort.

When a man has burnt his past and assumed a new identity, he begins life afresh. This is a metaphoric way of saying that a self-realised and enlightened man attains his original form as the truthful Brahm or as the pure consciousness called the Atma that is as brilliant as the Sun and as potent and powerful as the Fire.]

Canto 6, Brahmin 1

[This Canto no. 6 describes the exalted and senior stature of Pran in the pantheon of vital forces of Nature in Brahmin 1. Brahmin 2 narrates the metaphysical discussion between king Pravahan and sage Shwetketu in which the king asks five questions which the sage fails to answer. Then the king answers them himself. In the process, he describes the path taken by the Atma after death as well as the five subtle forms of the fire element. Brahmin 3 describes the process of preparing the Mantha or the concoction used during fire sacrifices, along with the various Mantras or holy words that are said while offering it to the sacred fire. Brahmin 4 deals with the process of procreation, and the final Brahmin 5 lists the long chain of sages and seers who were exponents of the philosophy propounded and enunciated in this Canto no. 6.

To begin with, Brahmin 1 establishes the supremacy of Pran over all other organs and the functions they represent in the body of the creature. Verse nos. 1 to 6 affirm the exalted stature of each of the sense organs of perception, and then goes on to explain how Pran is superior to all of them. It has a similarity to many other Brahmins and their verses, so a brief reference has been added in notes for cross reference for the reader. It is similar to Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 1, verse nos. 1-15 of the Sam Veda tradition, and to Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-6, 12-14; and Canto 3, verse no. 2-9 of the Rig Veda tradition.]

1. A person who is able to recognise, get acquainted with, as well as honour and worship that which or who is the best and the most acclaimed in this creation, which or who is the most senior and exalted entity in this world, gets the same honour, is recognised with the same dignity, and is shown the same respect and reverence by others in his community as he has himself shown it to the former (1).

[Note—This verse inspires us to have high and noble ideals and set our eyes on a lofty targets of great spiritual and moral value which can be uplifting not only for our individual selves but also help us to pull others who are less fortunate but look upon us for their upliftment. There have been souls in history whose lives, deeds and thoughts have inspired not only their own generation but all the generations that followed them. They are like the high mast-light or the beacon light of the lighthouse which guided others who seemed to be lost in the ocean of worldly turmoil. When we set high goals for ourselves, we would strive to achieve them inspite of the uphill task that it entails, but to reach the citadel in life one has to have his eyes looking up and not down. It is from a high ground that a wise man preaches, and all the people look up to him for guidance and advice. Naturally they respect and honour him with the intensity which is commensurate with his exalted stature.]

2. He who knows what is the best and purest form of anything, i.e. he who has exemplary ideals and chooses the best from what is available, is honoured and respected by others in his society as the wisest and most knowledgeable in his field.

With this perspective, a person who respects, honours and worships the faculty of speech known as Vaani or Vak as the best amongst the various faculties that he possesses is highly regarded and honoured amongst his near and dear ones as well as by all his other compatriots and peers. They treat him as the senior most and wisest member in their midst (2).

[Note—A man who is well read, well spoken and well cultured is obviously shown the greatest of respect by others in this world. A wise man uses his faculty of speech to give wise advice to others, to preach them the noble things in life, to lead them when they need leadership, and to disseminate information to those who are not fortunate enough to have direct access to it themselves. That is why teachers who are personifications of the grand values and virtues of the faculty of speech are shown so much reverence in society. Aside of this point, learning of scriptures in ancient times relied heavily on the faculty of speech because they were in oral tradition.

The faculty of speech or *Vaani* or *Vak* located in the mouth of the creature is also the abode of the Fire God and the Pran which is the vital wind representing the Wind God. It stands for the supreme transcendental Brahman which is the ultimate Truth in creation as asserted in Canto 5, Brahmin 14, verse no 4, and Brahmin 15. It represents the astounding magical and mystical powers of the Supreme Being that enables even apparently dormant and imperceptible entities such as the wind and the fire elements secretly present in the inane and inert gross body to 'create' a sound through the medium of this faculty of speech and then 'hear' it through the faculty of hearing located in the ear as described in verse no. 4 below. What does a man speak about? Definitely about things that he sees with the faculty of sight located in the eye—verse no. 3 below. And finally, his Mana, or his mind and heart, is intricately involved in what he speaks because the mind would control the intellectual aspect of his spoken words, while the heart exercises control over the emotional and sentimental contents—verse no. 5 below.

The wider implication of this verse is that one should not waste the divine energy embodied as this glorious faculty in worthless chatter and gossip.

Refer Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 4-8, 11, 18; Canto 1, Brahmin 6, verse no. 1; Canto 2, Brahmin 2, verse no. 3; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 17; Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 2; and Canto 5, Brahmin 8, verse no. 1 in this context.]

3. A person who understands the importance and value of 'Pratistha' (i.e. of reputation, good name and fame, celebrated status, dignity, respect, decorum, renown, glory and honour that collectively establish a person in this world) endeavours to establish his reputation, good name and fame. He does not do anything that is detrimental to his Pratistha. He becomes well established and reputed, he becomes renowned and famous with a good name and fame, whether the circumstances and time are favourable for him or not.

The eyes and the faculty of sight is his Pratistha, because the eyes help him get established both during favourable as well as unfavourable circumstances and times. That is, the eye of wisdom and intelligence helps him to ascertain and exploit opportunities even when the chance appears to be bleak, the time inopportune, and the circumstance is not favourable.

A person who understands the importance and value of this faculty finds Pratistha, i.e. gets established and acquires fame and a good reputation, even when the goings may not be favourable for him (3).

[Note—A wise and erudite man has that deep insight and far reaching vision that enables him to see the truth even when it is concealed in falsehoods. This unique ability of his gives him fame and renown and establishes him as a wise, erudite, sagacious and learned man even in the eyes of his antagonists and enemies who recognise that he is a wise and saintly man who has a far reaching vision beyond the present. A wise man is honoured in a timeless manner. Wherever he goes, even during his bad patch of time, he is welcomed and honoured by all. People see him as a prophet and messiah who can show them the path even during the dark ages. The eye referred to here is not merely the physical organ of the body that sees material things in this world, but to the eye of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment that

provides him with a unique mystical power of divine vision usually called the 'third eye'. This eye does not get misled by the illusions created by this artificial world, but is able to penetrate deep inside to see the 'actual truth'. This establishes the importance of the *eyes* for a wise man.

Refer Canto 1, Brahmin 6, verse no. 2; Canto 2, Brahmin 3, verse no. 4-6; Canto 3, Brahmin 2, verse no. 5; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 18; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 12, 15; Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 4; and Canto 5, Brahmin 14, verse no. 4 in this context.]

4. A person who understands and realises the great importance and eclectic value of the divine 'Sampads' (i.e. the resources, wealth, property, assets; here referring to the divine, holy and auspicious virtues present in a man that determine his character, nature, habits, psychology and temperament) that one possesses, is able to fulfill all his aspirations, desires and hopes.

Verily, the ears are symbols of this Sampad, because it is through the faculty of hearing situated in the ear that a man is enabled to hear (and then benefit from) the Vedas which are themselves a great treasury of truthful knowledge about all that exists in this creation, a knowledge that empowers a learned and wise man to acquire all worldly as well as spiritual assets and resources that provide for his all round welfare and well being. This is because 'listening attentively' is a chief medium of acquiring information and expert knowledge about anything.

A man who understands the import of this observation is able to fulfill all his ambitions, hopes and aspirations (4).

[Note—The *ears* are the instruments which helps a man to become aware of happenings and developments in far off lands where his eyes cannot see and his body cannot go. It is through the faculty of hearing that he becomes aware of certain opportunities that exist somewhere, and then the man goes and exploits these opportunities for his own good. He hears of certain business prospects, for example, and takes advantage of them to earn wealth and fame; this helps to enhance his stature in the world and aids in the fulfillment of his various materialistic ambitions and worldly desires. Similarly, when he hears wise men speak or hears the scriptures explained, he acquires new knowledge and removes his doubts, thereby paving the way for his spiritual growth and accumulation of divine qualities; he begins to collect sacred and auspicious virtues around him one by one, and get rid of his spiritual liabilities in the form of sinful and evil thoughts and demeanors. In short, a man who realises the importance and significance of judiciously employing resources and acquiring wealth and virtues, both the pecuniary and the spiritual, should pay proper attention and honour to the faculty of hearing and the instrument that is used by this faculty, i.e. the ears. He should understand that the ears should not be misused in hearing those things that are demeaning and demoting for his self or his Atma; he should desist from hearing anything that is inauspicious and unrighteous, unholy and unethical, because the ears are like the door of the chest representing his mind and heart which should be stacked with gold and not used as a dumping bin for rubbish, as it were.

Canto 3, Brahmin 2, verse no. 6; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 19; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 13; and Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 5 in this context.]

5. A person who knows the greater importance, significance, value and meaning of the word 'Ayatan' (meaning refuge, dwelling, shelter, abode, measurement), i.e. who understands the broader implication and import of this word both in the worldly sphere as well as in the spiritual realm, becomes a personified form of Ayatan. That is, he is a provider of solace, succour, shelter, refuge and comfort not only to those who are near and dear to him i.e. are within the close circle of his acquaintances, but

even to those who are distant from him i.e. those who may not be in direct in his contact or even those who are not so favourably inclined towards him¹.

Indeed, a person's Mana (emotional heart and thinking mind) is his Ayatan² (because such magnanimous and compassionate emotions originate in the heart, they reside in the heart, and they need the moral and intellectual support of the thinking and discriminating mind to justify them on the basis of wisdom and erudition acquired by studying the scriptures, hearing about the truth, seeing the magnificent positive effects such gracious gestures have on the community and the creation at large, and the profound sense of satisfaction and its attendant happiness and bliss that one gets when one shows the grand virtues of Ayatan in practical terms).

A person who understands the glorious effects and grand virtues of the concept of Ayatan in its broader perspective provides succour, solace, refuge, shelter, dwelling and support to those who are close to him, and even to those who are not so close (without any distinction between them, because he has equanimity and even-heartedness towards all the creatures) (5).

[Note—¹A wise and self-realised person sees the same Atma or pure consciousness present in his bosom as being also present in the other person. This is because he has realised the omnipresent and all-pervading nature of the Atma as well as the fact that it is an embodiment of the cosmic Spirit which is the same in all the living beings. This holistic and all inclusive vision of creation fills him with love and compassion towards all the creatures, even those who may be antagonized towards him because he does not see their external appearance but their true form and fundamental basis as the pure and untainted Atma. That they are unfavourable and inimical towards a wise man is because they are ignorant about the truth of their own self and that does not mean that their 'self' is tainted by such negative emotions as being inimical and antagonist towards anybody. Further, such self-realised persons possess the attributes of a truly pious saint in the sense that their heart is magnanimous, benevolent, merciful and kind towards all the creatures because they see their own image in them as much as they see themselves as an image of the supreme Brahm. They are a treasury of the grand virtues of equanimity, equality, fortitude and tolerance. Such people are like the caring grandfather of a family, who welcomes even his errant offspring who comes to him seeking his refuge and blessing. In brief, such a holy person becomes an *Ayatan* or a refuge-house for all the creatures of this creation that would care to seek his shelter and help. He would not turn them away even if that meant his own harm.

²The Mana is the subtle body of the creature which harbours his Atma; it is here that the Atma moves and roams about in a subtle and imperceptible manner. The Atma lives in the heart, and its main avenue for sourcing information and seeking advice is the wise mind with which it first comes in contact before it has any chance to interact with the gross body and the external world. Hence it is the Ayatan of the 'true self' of the creature. The word also means a 'measurement', hence a man's attitudes, level of his wisdom, intelligence, emotions, sentiments, tendencies, temperaments, degree of humanity, humility and holiness possessed by him, and such other positive criterions that determine his personality and characters are 'measured' by the state of his Mana, his heart and mind. It is his Mana that 'harbours' or 'gives refuge and shelter' to all his aspirations, hopes, ambitions, wishes, yearnings, expectations and desires. In fact, the world itself exists for the individual because his Mana thinks that it does by 'giving shelter' to such thoughts, because for a truly renunciate man this same world ceases to have any existence because he does not give shelter to such thoughts that might attract his sense organs towards the artificial attractions of the world. In other words, the *Mana is the Ayatan* of the man and the world.

Refer Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 4-9, 12; Canto 3, Brahmin 2, verse no. 7; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 20; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 10-17; and Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 6-7 in this context.]

6. A person who understands the subtle meaning as well as the great importance and wider ramifications of the word 'Prajapati' (literally the Lord of his subjects; the Master; the caretaker of his people; the creator Brahma), i.e. who is aware of the stupendous potentials, divine virtues and eclectic qualities that the supreme creator known as Prajapati Brahma possessed and which have been passed on to him as his image, is able to obtain enhancement of his own stature from being an ordinary mortal to one who presides over a large brood of happy, growing and abundant livestock and contented subjects represented by his family, friends, acquaintances and compatriots who are happy and potent in every respect¹.

Verily, 'Reta' or the semen harbouring the life-giving sperm is a personification of Prajapati and embodies his magnificent powers and magical abilities to create. It symbolises such virtues and attributes as virility, fertility, vitality, strength, potent, vigour and manliness possessed by the supreme creator that helps him to create and recreate, to generate and regenerate.

A person who is wisened to this grand, divine, mystical, magical and enigmatic virtue possessed by the Reta as well as by Prajapati is blessed with richness in the form of abundant livestock, as well as by contented and prosperous subjects who are strong, vibrant, vigorous, potent, able and powerful² (6).

[Note—¹A wise man realises that he, being an image of the supreme creator, has some moral obligations, and to enable him to fulfill his obligations the creator has bestowed him with certain blessings or powers which are meant to serve the supreme Lord and not to satisfy carnal desires for self gratification. The wealth, the strength, the powers and the authority that a man possesses are to be used to serve his brethren and make them as happy as it is possible. Naturally a man, especially a king for example, who has this noble vision of creation, would be surrounded by cheerful subjects and healthy livestock. When the kingdom is prosperous and thriving, the subjects grow in number and live healthy lives, procreating and enhancing the populations of the kingdom, thereby establishing and spreading the fame and good name of their patron, the king in this example, in all corners of the world. On the contrary, a cruel and recklessly merciless king who indulges in self gratification, who extracts taxes without taking into consideration the problems of his subjects, who involves in meaningless wars and other such exercises, is sure to cause ruin in the long run not only for his own people but even those who boarder his kingdom much like a rotten spot in an apple that spreads rapidly to destroy the whole fruit. People tend to flee such kingdoms and take shelter in far off places which are peaceful and prosperous.

²A person who has the wisdom and vision to lovingly take care of his dependants as the supreme creator known as Prajapati had taken care of his vast creation, whether living or non-living, whether animals, birds or humans etc., would naturally be surrounded by happy and contented creatures. There would be no cause of stress and uncertainty about the future, so the population grows by leaps and bounds. The populace is well fed, healthy and prosperous; they are happy, cheerful and contented; they live a long and productive life. The signs of vibrancy, fertility and abundance abound everywhere.

Refer Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse no. 23; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 17, 28; Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 3; Canto 5, Brahmin 12, verse no. 1; and Canto 5, Brahmin 13, verse no. 1-4 in this context.]

7. [Verse no. 7-14 describe the anecdote when all the individual organs claimed that they were superior to the other, but failed to prove their supremacy. Finally, the Pran won hands down and all the organs accepted it as the most exalted one amongst them. Refer Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse nos. 2-27 in this context. A similar incident is mentioned in another major Upanishad belonging to the Sam Veda tradition, called Chandogya in its Canto 5, Section 1, verse nos. 1-15 which is published separately in this series.]

All the various forms that the conscious life factor called Pran present in the body as the different faculties and sense perceptions (such as speech, taste, sight, hearing, touch, smell etc.) began arguing amongst themselves about who was superior. Each said that he was, and unable to decide, they went to Brahma, the creator. They asked him who amongst them was superior.

Brahma replied, 'When the body is treated as most impure, unholy and inauspicious by others when one of you leave it, then that one amongst you is to be considered senior¹' (7).

[Note--¹This is because as long the senior most Pran lives in the body the latter does not become demoted from its exalted stature as an abode of a senior God personified by that particular life-giving Pran even as the king's throne is given respect as long as the king is alive and has the crown on his head and the scepter in his hands. But when the king either abdicates or is overthrown, the throne loses its importance and is relegated to a store room in a history museum.

It will be observed in the following verses that in order to ascertain who was senior amongst them, all the faculties of the body left it for one year, one by one. In the absence of any given one faculty, the body did suffer, for example when the speech left the body the man couldn't speak, but other organs helped it to cope with this situation and the body survived. It did not die or perish. But finally when the Pran (breath) decided to leave, the body began very agitated. It would naturally die if it couldn't breathe. A dead body is regarded as most unholy, and it decomposes rapidly. It has to be disposed of quickly, otherwise it starts to stink. Hence, it was proved beyond doubt that Pran was the senior most amongst its peers.]

8. First, it was the turn of the faculty of speech to leave the body. It remained outside for one year and then came back. It asked its companions—'How could you all live and survive in my absence?'

The rest of the faculties replied in unison—'Just like a dumb man lives without the benefit of speech. He breathes through his nostrils, he sees through his eyes, he hears by his ears, he learns and experiences (knows) by the medium of his Mana (mind), and procreates with his semen (genital organs), we were able to live and survive in the absence of your company'.

Hearing this, the faculty of speech lost its false pride as well as the pretence of importance and superiority, and entered the body most humbly (8).

9. Then it was the turn of the faculty of sight located in the eyes to leave the body. It remained outside for one year and then came back. It asked its companions—'How could you all live and survive in my absence?'

The rest of the faculties replied in unison—'Just like a blind man lives without the benefit of sight. He breathes through his nostrils, he speaks with his faculty of speech (mouth), he hears by his ears, he learns and experiences (knows) by the medium of his Mana (mind), and procreates with his semen (genital organs), we were able to live and survive in the absence of your company'.

Hearing this, the faculty of sight represented by the eye lost its false pride as well as the pretence of importance and superiority, and entered the body most humbly (9).

10. Next, it was the turn of the faculty of hearing located in the ears to leave the body. It remained outside for one year and then came back. It asked its companions—‘How could you all live and survive in my absence?’

The rest of the faculties replied in unison—‘Just like a deaf man lives without the benefit of hearing anything. He breathes through his nostrils, he speaks with his faculty of speech (mouth), he sees with his eyes, he learns and experiences (knows) by the medium of his Mana (mind), and procreates with his semen (genital organs), we were able to live and survive in the absence of your company’.

Hearing this, the faculty of hearing represented by the ear lost its false pride as well as the pretence of importance and superiority, and entered the body most humbly (10).

11. Next was the turn of the Mana (mind) to leave the body. It remained outside for one year and then came back. It asked its companions—‘How could you all live and survive in my absence?’

The rest of the faculties replied in unison—‘Just like a mad, intoxicated, ignorant, deluded and stupid man lives without the benefit of intelligence, wisdom, erudition and knowledge of anything. He breathes through his nostrils, he speaks with his faculty of speech (mouth), he sees with his eyes, he hears by his ears, and procreates with his semen (genital organs), we were able to live and survive in the absence of your company’.

Hearing this, the Mana too lost its false pride as well as the pretence of importance and superiority, and entered the body most humbly (11).

12. Then the next to leave the body was the virility and fertility in a man represented by his semen (sperm) or ‘Reta’. It remained outside for one year and then came back. It asked its companions—‘How could you all live and survive in my absence?’

The rest of the faculties replied in unison—‘Just like an impotent man lives and survives without the ability to procreate and have offspring. He breathes through his nostrils, he speaks with his faculty of speech (mouth), he sees with his eyes, he hears by his ears, and he thinks and has experiences with his Mana, we were able to live and survive in the absence of your company’.

Hearing this, the Reta (representing virility, fertility and potentials to procreate as represented by the semen and the sperms in it) lost its false pride as well as the pretence of importance and superiority, and entered the body most humbly (12).

13. Finally, the Pran (the vital wind present in the form of breath and other vital winds such as Apan, Saman, Udan and Vyana) began its preparations for leaving the body for one year. Just like a strong stallion that is eager and about to canter away to freedom pulls up the stake by which it is tied to the ground, this decision of the Pran to break free from the shackle of the body created great agitation and extreme restlessness amongst the other signs of life in the body represented by the faculties as mentioned above.

They pleaded together to the Pran thus—‘Oh Lord! Please do not leave the body because we just cannot survive without you’.

Pran replied, 'Alright. All of you pay tributes to me (or literally give me sacrifice)'.

At this, all the organs said alright and assured the Pran that its wishes would be honoured (13).

14. The different organs of perceptions began to offer their tributes to the senior Pran. The organ of speech said, 'I am offering to you the best quality and virtue called 'Vashistha' that I possess. Now onwards you would be blessed with it'¹.

Then the eyes said, 'The virtue of 'Pratistha' that I possess would now belong to you. Without you, I would not have any importance'².

The ears blessed the Pran, saying, 'The assets represented by the 'Sampada' that I possess should now onwards belong to you. Without you, they would be worthless'³.

The Mana said, 'The grand virtue of 'Ayatan' that I possess would now belong to you. Henceforth, it would be you who will act as the support and the foundation of all that exist in this world; it would be you in which the entire living world exist and find its saviour; it would be you which would act as the criterion by which the world and its importance would be measured'⁴.

Finally, the Reta or the semen/sperms blessed the Pran, saying, 'Now henceforth, my powers to recreate would delve upon you. You will be the one who would be blessed and empowered to reproduce the creation in its own likeness; it would be powerless without you'⁵.

'So far so good, but what would be my food and what would I wear?' asked Pran. [All the organs had anointed the Pran as their emperor. So this newly appointed sovereign, who was now empowered, armed and adorned with all the glorious virtues and the best of qualities in creation befitting his exalted stature, wished to know what would he eat and what robes would he wear as the senior most amongst them?]

Vak and other organs replied in unison, 'All living beings, including the humblest insects and worms (right up to the highly evolved humans) would be your food. Water would be your cloth'⁶.

A wise person who understands that water is a natural covering of the Pran will always sip some water before commencing to eat anything (and he never eats without having sufficient amount of water to accompany the food). He never allows the Pran to go without its natural clothing or covering⁷ (14).

[Note--¹In other words, *Vak*, the faculty of speech, blessed the chief Pran as follows—'You would be regarded as the senior most factor of life, being the essential instrument by which the man would be able to express himself, to teach others and disseminate information, to ask question with the intention of acquiring knowledge and removing ignorance, and learning the ancient wisdom enshrined in the Vedas which are in the oral tradition—your presence would be essential for the creature to carry on with any of the functions that I, the faculty of speech, am famous for. You would be honoured as the most prominent amongst us like the star of the polar bear that points towards the North Star—in fact the word 'Vashistha' means exactly this. You would be the imminent factor of life and the habitat of the Fire God just like I, the faculty of speech, am. You would be recognised as the most prominent form of Pran in the cluster of Prans that together help the creature to live a fruitful life—without you my glories and potentials would be useless and ineffective'. That is why when the man dies and the Pran, the various vital winds in the body, especially the breath, leaves it, the mouth is unable to speak a word about anything in spite of the body having the physical mouth still with it. Similarly, if the man is not able to speak because the air inside his body becomes too weak to produce sound in the throat, his

knowledge and wisdom would not be of any use for others because he would not be able to express and explain himself. Refer verse no. 2.

²In other words, *Chakshu*, the eyes where the faculty of the perception of sight is situated, said to honour the Pran, 'You would acquire fame and name as the one who helps to establish a creature and give it the vision required for a fruitful life; your presence would be essential for the creature to see anything in this world inspite of my being present in its body. Without you, I would be worthless because the creature would merely stare blankly in the void without even registering what it is seeing. Henceforth, you would activate my faculty and potentials; it would be by you who would lend the vital inspiration to the mind and the heart that would enable them to see and comprehend and interpret what is being seen by the creature, both at the intellectual level as well as at the emotional level. Even as I am the habitat of the Sun God, you too would be empowered with the stupendous powers of this God'. That is why when the man dies and the Pran, the various vital winds in the body, especially the breath, leaves it, the eyes are unable to see anything inspite of them being physically present in the body. Refer verse no. 3.

³In other words, *Srotra*, the ears representing the faculty of the perception and hearing blessed the Pran as follows, 'All the glories, the good name, fame and knowledge that a creature is able to acquire because of the faculty of hearing that it possesses would now be possible only because of you. It will be you who would enable the creature to perform this function of hearing. All the benefits that the creature enjoys because of the presence of this faculty in its body, such as being able to acquire numerous worldly and spiritual assets dependent upon heightened knowledge and awareness, which in turn depend upon the ability of it to hear anything, would be made possible only as long as you, the Pran, wishes it to be so. As a corollary therefore, all the glories and fame that one acquires because of the presence of the faculty of hearing would now onwards belong to you. It is you who would be honoured for them'. That is why, when a creature dies and its Pran leaves the body, it is unable to hear anything inspite of the body still having the instrument of the ear physically intact in it. Refer verse no. 4.

⁴The *Mana* represents the emotional heart and intelligent mind of the creature. This world exists because the Mana thinks this way, for if the Mana decides that it has nothing to do with it, the world, which was so recently most charming, suddenly loses its charms, luster and attraction; it cannot ensnare the creature any further with its attractive and charming allurements, or persuade it to remain engrossed in it any longer once total detachment and renunciation sprouts in the mind and heart of this creature and it has sincerely become dispassionate towards and disenchanted with the world. But what would a lifeless body without any Pran or life in it do? Who would even think of having anything to do with a dead world having no Pran in it? The word Pran not only refers to the presence of 'life' in anything but also applies to the 'essential importance and value' of it to a creature. If anything has no Pran, if it loses its essential utility and value for the creature, then the latter would have nothing to do with it. Then, even the mind and heart would cease to have anything to do with such an entity. Therefore symbolically, the Pran is at the core to support all that exists in this creation; it is the Pran that gives anything its value and importance; it is virtually the foundation of their worth, importance and significance. It is a criterion by which we decide whether we would like to deal with something or not. Refer verse no. 5.

⁵That is, *Reta*, representing the potentials of a creature to reproduce a new generation in its own likeness, blessed the vital wind called Pran that infuses life and its vitality, vigour, potentials, strength, fertility, virility and vibrancy in the creature at the individual level and the creation at the macro level, by saying thus—'Now onwards, I would be useless until you, i.e. Pran, is active. When a creature would reproduce in its own likeness, it would be deemed that it has injected its 'own Pran' in the progeny springing forth from it. Without the vital spark of 'life', i.e. Pran, being present in the semen, it would be as worthless as any mucous discarded from

the body as its waste matter. It is your presence as the vital spark of life that forms an integral character of the sperm that would give the semen its worth and potentials'. That is why we say that the new born has 'Pran' in it, and not semen or sperm. If the semen is unable to reproduce, as in the case of impotent men, then it is useless jelly of mucous. Further, there is another interesting connotation here. The sperm has a unique ability to 'swim' or 'move up'. This ability to move in the fluid semen is the most potent proof that it has life in it. Again, Pran is associated with movement because it is a synonym for the wind/air element, and the latter has this marvelous ability to move things around. This is clear when we see how a air-filled balloon remains restless. This sperm swims up to reach the female ova to fertilise them in the fluid of the female organ. This is not an easy task for such a delicate, fragile and microscopic entity as the sperm. Therefore, it naturally is possessed of some supernatural powers which are collectively called its Pran, or its dynamic vitality, stamina, strength, virility etc. Refer verse no. 6.

⁶By saying that the *living being* would be the food of Pran it is meant here that whatever the creature eats would be used as nourishment by the Pran to provide life sustaining vital nutrients to the body of the creature. This observation is very obvious because no one would survive in the absence of food—refer Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse no. 18; Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 1-3; and Canto 3, Brahmin 2, verse no. 10-13 amongst others in this context. Similarly, *water* is the most essential ingredient for life to be sustained, and its importance just cannot be over emphasised. Water is a harbinger and a herald of life. The food can neither be grown nor be of any use without the presence of water element in creation. A person would die for want of food if water is not made an integral and unavoidable part of the entire process from growth of food to its cooking, eating, digestion and assimilation in the body, and the ultimate elimination of waste products from it. In other words, the Pran, being a very delicate thing, is protected by a covering of water which surrounds it from all the sides much like the life-injecting sperm is protected on all sides by the fluid of the semen. So Pran literally wears water as its ceremonial robe as the King of life in this creation. Even as the robe gives the King his pomp and ceremony, water in this case lends Pran its majesty and magnificence. Refer Canto 1, Brahmin 2, verse no. 2; and Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 13, 18 amongst others in this context.

⁷A wise person does not eat to satisfy his taste buds or gratify his other carnal desires; he never overeats and never eats such things that cause harm to the body which harbours not only the Pran but all the other organs as well. Similarly, he would ensure that he drinks sufficient quantity of water so that the Pran can maintain its prime shape and form while remaining in a good and healthy state.]

Canto 6, Brahmin 2

[This Brahmin describes the metaphysical discussion between king Pravan of the kingdom of Panchal and sage Shwetketu, the son of Aaruni. The sage was haughty that he is very learned, but he could not answer five questions asked by the king. Then the king answered them himself. This Brahmin has an uncanny resemblance to Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 4, Section 10-14 and Canto 5, Section 3 to 10 of the Sam Veda tradition. Refer also, inter alia, to Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 36; Canto 4, Brahmin 4, verse nos. 1-25; and Canto 5, Brahmin 10 of the present Brihad Aranyak Upanishad in the context of what is enunciated in this Brahmin.

Basically, this Brahmin elucidates about the path taken by a creature after death and the five forms that the sacred fire of creation takes; it is called the 'Panch Agni'. Refer to note of verse no. 14. Incidentally, the path taken after death has also

been elaborately described in Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1 of the Rig Veda tradition which has been published separately in this series.]

1. Shwetketu, the son of sage Aaruni, went to the kingdom of Panchal and presented himself before king Pravahan, the son of king Jival, who was seated in his court and was being served by his courtiers.

Seeing Shwetketu, the king called out to him, 'O Kumar¹'.

Shwetketu replied accordingly, 'Bho²'.

Pravahan asked him, 'Has your father taught you³?'

Shwetketu haughtily replied, 'Yes' (1).

[Note—¹This form of address is not appropriate to welcome a guest, especially the son of a renowned sage. The king had heard about the false pride and arrogance of Shwetketu who thought that he was most learned. The digit 3 in the text is indicative of the protracted sound of a vowel in the Sanskrit language. Here the vowel is the letter 'O' and the king sounded surprised and showed his little bit of annoyance when he saw that Shwetketu has come unannounced in the assembly, thinking in his vanity that no one can dare to stop him. He was so proud that he didn't care to maintain decorum of court by asking for permission to meet the king, or even send a message that he has arrived.

²The answer of Shwetketu consisting of a monosyllable Bho indicated his indignation at being not shown proper respect in the assembly. It means 'What', or a rude form of 'Yes, what is it'.

³The king asked him this question to indicate his indiscretion in replying to a king without any manner of respect. So he kind of admonished him for the rudeness which the sage's son displayed because of his haughtiness and arrogance as well as lack of culture and humility that comes with true wisdom and erudition.]

2. [Pravahan asked him five questions for which Shwetketu had no answer.] The king asked him, 'When the subjects (i.e. the living being; the creature) die, they go by different paths. Do you know about it?'

Shwetketu answered in the negative, saying, 'No, I do not know'.

The king asked, 'It comes back to this mortal world repeatedly. Are you aware of how or why it does so?'

Shwetketu again replied in the negative, 'No, I do not know of it either'.

The king then asked him, 'Say then, why does that world never get full by countless such creatures who constantly and repeatedly die and go up there?'

Shwetketu replied, 'I do not know'.

The king asked him again, 'Do you know how many oblations are needed to be made in the sacred fire of a sacrifice that would infuse the water element with the stupendous power to display magical signs of life and get transformed into a living being who can get up, move about and speak?'

'No, I don't know' was Shwetketu's reply.

'Do you know about the deeds that are to be done by a creature to enable it to take the path leading to Godhood, or the path that takes it to the abode of the spirits of the dead ancestors?' asked the king. 'Have you heard these words of great sages and seers that there are two distinct paths, one leading to the abode of Gods and the other to the abode of dead ancestors? Both the paths concern humans. The entire world takes either of these paths, and they lie between the father represented by the Du Loka or heaven and the mother represented by the Prithivi Loka or earth¹'.

Shwetketu was dumbfounded because he had no answers for any of these questions. So he said, 'I do not know the answer of any of these questions' (2).

[Note—¹The heaven is where the supreme Father known as the Viraat Purush lives, and the earth is like the mother because it is in its bowl that the entire living and visible world has been conceived and developed. The earth provides each and every ingredient necessary to conceive, develop, nourish, sustain and enhance the creation. It is the earth where the creation lives and it is from the earth that it extracts everything that it needs. Like a loving mother who suffers herself but never complains about the intensity of suffering that she has to undergo at the hands of her offspring, mother earth also does not complain inspite of she being singularly exploited by all the creatures, and especially her so-called enlightened and elder son, the human being. The Father might get angry one day when he sees that his progeny is only giving him a bad name and then he decides to punish him by simply concluding the creation in a big winding-up operation known as the great dooms-day, but the benevolent earth would go on still harbouring some rudimentary forms of life in her womb so that when the time comes and the Father's anger subsides, she could reintroduce life once again.]

The path mentioned here is not the path of ultimate liberation and deliverance of the soul called Kaivalya Mukti wherein it merges with its primary source, never to come back again in this world. This can only happen when the creature becomes completely detached from its deeds. But those who are attached to the deeds, i.e. who think that they are the doer of deeds and therefore are entitled to their rewards, do not find ultimate Mukti, but keep on oscillating between one life and the next life, between death and birth because of their being involved in deeds and their attendant consequences. When a person thinks that he is a doer of deeds, he becomes liable to suffer the consequences of these deeds. A man has so many hopes and expectations in life, and it is impossible to completely fulfill them. So, these vestiges of unfulfilled desires propel the creature to assume a new body in the hope of accomplishing his unfinished task. This, however, is an endless cycle. Hence, the creature continues to take birth and die repeatedly. This is the path mentioned here in this verse—the philosophy that says that when one does deeds in this world, the consequences of these deeds would not leave the creature untouched and it is bound to be affected by them. It would either go the heaven where the Gods live or to the world of dead ancestors where their spirits live according to the quality of the deeds, either to be elevated to Godhood or be demoted to return to this mortal world as another creature.]

3. The king then asked Shwetketu to stay as his guest, but he was so perturbed, humiliated and frustrated that he declined the gesture and went back to his father. He felt so dismayed that he rebuked his father and said disgustingly, 'You had told me that you have taught me all that there was to be taught, didn't you?'

Seeing that his son was most agitated and perplexed, the father asked him, 'Oh the one with excellent intelligence and wit. Say what happened?'

The son replied, 'He (the king) asked me five questions but I could not answer even one of them. (Imagine, how embarrassing it was for me in his full court?)'.

The father said, 'What questions were they?'

Saying 'they are these', the son repeated the questions for his father (3).

4. His father told him that he had taught him all that he knew, and kept nothing untold. He told his son, 'Now both of us would go to that king, and keeping the vows of Brahmacharya we shall stay with him¹'.

The son was so peeved and disgruntled that he refused to accompany his father. He said, 'You go alone yourself'.

Hearing this, Gautam (i.e. the father of Shwetketu) went to the place of king Jaivali Pravahan. The king welcomed him respectfully, offered him a seat, and asked

his attendants to bring water with which he washed his feet and offered oblations to him befitting his stature of a noble saint².

Then the king voluntarily said, even before the sage could express his desires, that he would fulfill his wishes (4).

[Note—¹In ancient times, learned and wise people had no sense of false pride or ego, and if they did not know anything they didn't feel ashamed at acknowledging it. Not only that, they would not even hesitate to go to that person who had rebuked them for having inadequate knowledge and humiliating them in public on this count. Their main aim was to imbibe as much knowledge and from as many sources as possible, without allowing hypocrisy and self-pride coming into the way. Even the person who had humiliated them, such as the king in this episode, felt obliged and honoured when he was asked to accept such people as their disciples and teach them. Another pertinent point is that even Kshatriya kings were often more educated in principles of theology, metaphysics and spiritualism than the Brahmins who are traditionally held to be superior in knowledge pertaining to these fields. Two sterling examples are available in this Upanishad alone—one is that of king Ajatshatru (refer Canto 2, Brahmin 1) and the other is king Janak (refer Canto 3 and 4).

²The way the king welcomed the father is in sharp contrast with the reception he accorded to his son. The king knew who was who in his kingdom and what kind of treatment should be meted out to him, for if he hadn't been aware of such basic knowledge he had no right to rule over a kingdom. The son was haughty and arrogant, while the father was humility personified. And therefore the wise and sagacious king was prudent enough to give each of them a reception which was in consonance with their mentality.]

5. He (Shwetketu's father) said, 'Oh king! You have promised me to fulfill my desires. So I request you to ask me the same questions which you had asked my son' (5).

6. The king (Pravahan) said, 'Oh Gautam! The boon you wished granted is one which is like the excellent ones granted by Gods who are propitiated by penances and austerities. So it would be better if you ask for something more ordinary and more relevant for a human being, something which concerns him more directly and which is more related to his general welfare in the world' (6).

[Note—The king wished to ascertain whether the father was also short-tempered as the son and gets easily annoyed at his refusal to teach him higher things in life without testing his eligibility for this knowledge by throwing to him the bait of worldly charms which are, however, perishable in nature, and which no erudite and elderly sage would wish to have. The king wanted to judge the father and decide if he was intellectually and emotionally prepared to imbibe great truths of spiritualism and metaphysics, or whether he was more inclined towards accepting worldly comforts and pleasures that the king could easily shower upon him as grant of a boon, for in this case he would certainly not be a fitting candidate for teaching profound mystical and esoteric truths about Brahm.]

7. Gautam replied, 'You are well aware that I already possess all the worldly possessions you are hinting at, such as gold, cows, horses, servants and attendants, a full family, and adequate amounts of ornaments and clothes. (Therefore I do not need them.) So you should provide me that boon which bears fruits that are everlasting and are considered as the most excellent amongst the rewards obtained by being fortunate enough to be blessed by a great boon that one expects from a great king like you'.

The king acceded to his request and said, 'Alright then, you should make efforts to acquire it through the process sanctioned for it in the scriptures'.

The sage agreed and said alright. 'I have come to you as a disciple or student to acquire knowledge and be educated. So, I agree'.

In ancient times, Brahmins eager to learn something presented themselves before Kshatriyas and others in the social hierarchy by merely expressing their desire to be their disciple for the purpose of learning something, and did not have to go through the various formalities (such as washing the feet of the teacher and bowing or prostrating before him to show one's respect and paying obeisance to him, physically serving the teacher or even keeping strict religious vows of fasting etc. while they stayed as students of the teacher-king). Hence, in this way, Gautam also began to live with the king as his disciple to satisfy his quest for knowledge (7).

8. The king said, 'Oh Gautam! Even as your ancestors had not taken umbrage for any errors committed by my ancestors, you should also forgive me for any impertinence and disrespect that I may inadvertently commit or show towards you while you stay with me as my disciple. This Vidya (knowledge) had not been available to any Brahmin before you¹ (and you are well aware of it, because it was exclusively available to Kshatriyas only). But still, seeing your eagerness and sincerity, I just cannot withhold it from you, especially when I have promised a Brahmin to fulfill his desires. No one can deny anything to you if it is available to him' (8).

[Note—¹This explains why Shwetketu's father did not teach him this knowledge.]

9. [Verse nos. 9-14 answer the fourth question of the king. This question is answered first because all other answers depend upon it.]

'Oh Gautam! The 'Du Loka' (the higher reaches of the sky; the heavens) is the symbolic first type of sacred fire. [This is because the fire element is universally present there as is borne out by the fact that huge cosmic explosions, which result in constant destruction of old stars and creation of new ones, the creation of black holes and annihilation of entire galaxies as well as the formation of new ones, is a constant and continuous process in the far reaches of the cosmos millions of 'light' years from our earth. Even according to the Upanishads, the Viraat Purush performed a symbolic fire sacrifice in the heaven which started off the chain reaction of creation.]

The Aditya (the celestial sun) is like its fuel. [This is because except the sun, the rest of the sky is frigid cold, with temperatures plunging to minus tens and hundreds of degrees, while the sun itself is regarded as the celestial cauldron eternally boiling with an endless supply of cosmic fuel. See note below.]

The rays of the Sun are like its 'smoke'. [This is because these rays spread to the distant corners of the solar system even as the smoke rising from the fire spread out in all the directions to proclaim the presence of a live fire source somewhere even though the latter might not be actually visible.]

The 'days' are like its flame, the 'primary directions' are like its red hot embers, while the 'secondary directions' are like the sparklers jumping out of the flame and spreading in all the directions at random. [The 'days' are like the flame because the glory of the fire is evident in the flames leaping up from it, giving light and heat. The day time is when the sun is visible in its magnificent glory, there is light in the world, and the heat and warmth of the sun is also felt during the day only, and not during the nights. Further, when the fire calms down and the flames stop leaping up, the red hot charcoal is still there where the fire was present till recently, resembling the amber and orange colour of the sky at dawn and dusk indicating that the celestial fire is still smoldering. The 'primary directions', such as the east and west, metaphorically resemble the embers of the celestial fire. Even the northern and

southern lights observed in the north and south poles come under this category. The 'secondary directions' are other ones like the north-east or north-west etc. They resemble the sparklers flying from the heavenly fire in a symbolic manner, and the numerous stars, meteors, comets and other lighted bodies spread across the sky at every conceivable angle as seen during the night prove this.]

In this great cosmic cauldron resembling the pit of the ritualistic sacred fire sacrifice, all the Gods offered their oblations most reverentially and with great faith and conviction. Their symbolic offerings made with great respect, devotion, commitment, faith, conviction, belief, dignity and honour became personified as the God known as Som (9).

[Note—This verse symbolises the first offering that the Gods made to the sacred fire in the heavens in order to start the process of visible creation. This fuel for the celestial fire sacrifice was provided by the sun. The days are lighted; hence they represent the brilliant flames of this fire. The rays of the sun spread out from it just like the smoke coming out of the fire. The directions symbolise big pieces of charcoal, while all the numerous angles of the celestial globe stand for the sparklers which are visibly represented by the stars, meteors, comets etc. The magnificent reward of this sacrifice is the Amrit (ambrosia) called Som which the Gods stored in the moon.

These sacrifices represent the different virtuous and auspicious deeds that a man does, and these help to spread his glories everywhere even as the glory of the sun spreads in all the corners of the globe in the form of its light. Even when the man passes away, his legend lives on much like the embers and sparklers of the fire remain even when the flame is not very conspicuous. The main operative clause is the 'offering of oblations with faith, devotion, conviction etc.' implying that a man should do everything with full sincerity as if each of his action is a symbolic offering to the cosmic fire sacrifice. Then the rewards would be equivalent to the Som which is the ambrosia of Gods that would give him eternity as well as peace and bliss.

The reference to this *Som* is important in the context of the verses that follow—because they describe the path taken by a person after death and his return back to this world. Som is a liquid and it has many connotations—it gives immense bliss and satisfaction; it is soothing for the nerves and mind because the pitcher of this Som in the sky is the moon, and the latter is renowned to act like a balm for ruffled and agitated senses as compared to the sun; it is a drink of fertility, strength, virility and vigour. The Moon God personifying this Som is the patron God of the Mana (emotional heart and intellectual mind), which in turn is responsible not only for such grand virtues as having faith, conviction and devotion etc. but also for remaining indulgent in the world or getting detached from it. Since the focus of this Brahmin is not on detachment which would preclude the chance of ever returning back to this world, but of doing deeds conducive to a person's happy journey from this world to the next and then back again, the Som in its role as the provider of happiness, fertility, virility and vigour is to be considered appropriate here.

The moon, which is a pitcher of this elixir of life and eternity, is white in colour just like the male semen. The semen is thus Som personified, and this sperm ensures that the person is eternal and imperishable because it has the inherent ability to carry the thumb print of the individual for eternity in the form of his offspring.

This fire represents one of the five legendary fires of creation. It also marks that step in the process of creation when the creature completes his life cycle and goes to heaven according to the deeds done by it during its tenure in this world.

In brief, what the king meant in the beginning when he said to the sage that this knowledge was limited to Kshatriya and was not accessible to Brahmins was the fact that since the Brahmins pursue Brahm, i.e. they follow the path of renunciation and detachment from this world and spend their time on self-realisation and contemplation on the supreme Atma which is consciousness and has nothing to do

with the mundane affairs of the world which are limited to the gross body, this knowledge was of no good for them; in fact it would be distractive for them and detrimental for their goal in life, so they had shunned it altogether. In ancient times, learned Brahmins had stayed in forests and other lonely places, spending their time in teaching and spreading the truth about 'Brahm' and not about the 'world'.

On the contrary, kings and other people belonging to the Kshatriya and other classes in the society were involved in worldly matters, and were more inclined towards learning things that made them wiser in mundane matters, as that related to the world and their immediate surroundings. They procreated and accumulated huge assets; they wished to enjoy the fruits of their efforts; they yearned to live long not to serve others but to derive more comfort and pleasure from their exploits. So when they did any religious sacrifice, it was not done primarily for the liberation and deliverance of their souls, but for more worldly and pecuniary benefits—such as name, fame, glory, gaining superiority over their adversaries, gaining victories over their imaginary enemies, enhancing their material wealth and status in society etc. They were rarely done for spiritual enhancement. Of course there were exceptions as we have this king Pravahan here, and kings Janak and Ajatshatru earlier.]

10. Oh Gautam! Parjanya or the rain present in the rain-bearing dark clouds is akin to the second type of cosmic sacred fire. [It is the cloud that is the harbinger of life on this earth because they harbour 'rain' which has the same importance as the 'fire' as far as the elements which are the most essential requirements in order to conceive and then sustain and develop life on this earth are concerned. Even as offerings are made to the sacred fire during a formal sacrifice with the belief that such offerings would be consumed by the fire and then transformed into desired boons, the rain contained in the cloud is the fruit or boon obtained by regarding the cloud as the symbolic sacred fire needed to carry forward the chain of creation.]

The year called Samvatsar is like its fuel. [The full year after the first rainy season has three chief seasons—winter, spring and summer. All the seasons together play a role to generate conditions conducive to formation of rain bearing clouds, such as the correct atmospheric configurations of optimum temperature, humidity, pressure, wind flow and other circumstances that are not possible if only a part of the year is taken into account. Even a slightest disturbance in the seasons adversely affects the prospects of cloud formation. So the Samvatsar symbolically acts as the fuel for the fire represented by the rain-bearing clouds as the seasons of the year collectively are responsible for the generation of clouds that carry the life-bearing rain.]

The white clouds called Abhrah are like the smoke rising from this symbolic fire. [Even before the dark rain-bearing clouds actually appear, the white fluffy clouds float across the sky indicating that the rains are round the corner, or that there has been rain somewhere else. So they resemble the smoke rising from the fire before the actual fire is lit in its full glory.]

The electric present in the lightening is like the leaping flame of that fire, the thunderbolt is like the red hot embers, while the thunder and rumbling of the clouds is like the sparklers leaping around everywhere. [The majesty, magnificence, dynamism and glory of the fire is represented by its flame and everyone wishes to avoid it because the flame would burn anything with which it comes in contact. The lightening has an uncanny resemblance to this flame—it burns instantly, has equal power, and it stands for the stupendous dynamism of the fire element. When lightening strikes, huge trees dry up very quickly as if they had been set on fire. The embers from a fire can be lifted and thrown towards something else to burn the latter to cinders; they can be visibly seen when they are thrown in a particular direction. Similarly, the bolt of

lightening, when it strikes upon the earth, can be visibly seen and marked; it also reduces anything that it hits to ash. Finally, the rumble and thunder accompanying lightening is heard miles away from the place where the clouds may be actually pouring rain (symbolising the life giving fire) upon the earth. So they resemble the sparklers flying from the fiercely burning fire in every direction, proclaiming that the clouds are pouring their 'fire of life' in the form of rain at a place which might not be actually visible to the observer.]

All the Gods offer their oblations to this sacred fire in the form of Som. This is what consists of rain-fall. [That is, the rain drops present in the cloud are the elixir of life and fertility called Som. It is this Som which falls down on the earth in the form of rain. Therefore, the Gods use the cloud as a means to shower the ambrosia of life known as Som in the form of rain. This Som was produced earlier as described in verse no. 9 above.] (10).

[Note—This is the second symbolic offering made in the sacred fire during the religious sacrificial ritual. The first type of offerings made in verse no. 9 had paved the way for the initiation of the process of creation and seeding of the earth. The life-injecting sperm produced in verse no. 9 and stored in the moon is now transferred to earth as 'rain'. The process would naturally involve the 'spraying' of the Som stored by the Gods in the celestial pitcher known as the moon, and for this they used the 'cloud'. This rain-bearing cloud was the 'sprayer' which sprayed this life-giving rain upon the earth. There is another symbolism here. The life that a man had led and the deeds he had done, the faith and believes that he had while doing deeds in his life were responsible for him either taking the path to the abode of Gods or the abode where the spirit of dead ancestor go—refer verse no. 2. Having reached there and having exhausted all his accumulated good effects, now the person has to come back to this world. This second offering made to the sacred fire that produces rain is the medium by which the person retraces his path back to the earth. This process has been elaborately described elsewhere. See introductory note to this Brahmin.

This verse describes the second step in the cosmic cycle of creation and destruction.

The importance of rain as a carrier of life and a visible form of Som, the elixir of life, is evident when we consider the fact that without rain no crops can grow on earth, and without crops no life can be sustained for lack of food. So when the Gods performed the cosmic fire sacrifice in order to initiate creation, they first created the Som representing the vital life-bearing forces of Nature; it was then transferred to earth in the form of rain which in turn produced crop and other eatables. The vitality, strength, potentials, stamina, potency, virility and vigour present inherently in this Som was then picked up by the crop which drew in this nectar of life while taking in their nourishment from the earth. Since plants can't take in solid food, the medium for this was the water supplied by the rain. This is proved by the fact that if the rainy season fails due to any adverse conditions, the crops fail that year though the water is always present in the bowls of the earth—this establishes that the food that sustains life on this earth is dependent upon water of the rains and not the water of any other kind.]

11. This mortal world inhabited by living beings is the symbolic third type of sacred fire. [The living world is like the visible sacred fire of creation around which all the Gods and patrons who perform the rituals gather. The visible world is a verifiable proof of the potentials and success of the ritual. Oblations are offered to the fire with certain objective and purpose in mind, and here they are to light the fire of life to reward the Gods for their efforts as described in verse no. 10 above. So once life appears and blossoms in this world, it symbolises that their endeavour has been

successful. Life necessitates the existence of fire in some form or the other, whether it is in a vivid form or in a latent and imperceptible form.]

For this fire, the earth is like the fuel. [This is because life continues to thrive in this world as the earth is an inexhaustible source of all the essential ingredients and nourishments needed to sustain it. Otherwise, life would have been extinguished long back. So metaphorically the earth acts like the fuel that keeps the fire representing life burning and thriving.]

The fire lit by humans on this earth is like the smoke of the fire of life. [This is because wherever there is a thriving population of humans, they would need to cook and therefore light a fire. This fire invariably produces smoke and soot. When one is lost in the wilderness or in some unknown land and is searching for some human habitation, then if one sees smoke rising far away in the horizon one concludes that there must be some villagers there and heads in that direction. This shows that smoke is a signal of life present upon earth. When life comes to an end due to any cause at a certain place, there would be an eerie silence there and no smoke would rise up from any corner because there would be no one lighting the fire in the household hearth. In brief, smoke is a signal of 'fire of life' burning on earth; it is a figure of speech to indicate the presence of life.]

The night is like its flame, the moon is like the amber, and the stars are like the sparklers flying everywhere from a burning fire. [During the day time the farmer is busy in his field, and it is during the evening hours that village bonfires are lit along with the fire of the household hearth. Food is cooked when night falls, and people gather around community fires to discuss the day's events. This is represented here by saying that it resembles the flame of the fire of life. The moon is rounded like a large piece of charcoal in the fire pit, and it changes its shape every night just like the case that no two pieces of ember are like. So the parallel is most apt. The stars are spread across the canopy of the night sky much like the sparklers flying from a raging fire. It should be noted that the Upanishads were composed in those times when modern system of fire was not in vogue and firewood was the only means to light the fire. Such fires give a lot of smoke and crackling sparklers that fly off in all the directions and even cause huge fires if they find some tinder to aid them.]

In this symbolic sacred fire of creation, the Gods offer rain as the oblation and this creates the reward in the shape of food¹ upon which the life on this earth survives (11).

[Note--¹The *food* is like the token fruit of success in this cosmic sacred fire sacrifice ritual done to create life. The Gods represent those creatures that had gone to heaven upon their death by the virtue of auspicious, righteous and noble deeds done by them in their previous lives. But such creatures have not obtained full salvation so to say, because that would have meant that their souls had merged with their primary source, the supreme Soul of the cosmos, i.e. with Brahm. Instead they had become Gods as they had wanted to enjoy the fruits or rewards of all the good deeds that they had done in the world in their previous lives. Since they are still attached to the world and wish to enjoy its comforts, when the good effects of their deeds wear out, they do the sacrifice in order to create life on this earth and come back as another creature to once again enjoy the world that they could not fully enjoy earlier.

Now that the 'seeding of the earth' is done, the next step would obviously be the 'sprouting of life', the very purpose for which the Gods had done the fire sacrifice in verse no. 1. Since life on earth sprouted from this rain, which is primarily the water element, it had to depend upon it like the child that depends upon its father. But where is the mother in whose womb the child is conceived? This 'mother' is the earth, and the nourishment that the embryo needs to grow is provided by the 'food' produced on the earth. So, the vital spark of life passed down from the heaven in the

form of rain is transferred to the creature in the form of the basic ingredients contained in the food produced on earth and eaten by the creature. This marks the third step in creation.

This fire marks the third step in the five steps in the process of cosmic cycle of creation and destruction.]

12. Oh Gautam! A man is like the fourth type of the symbolic cosmic fire in creation. [This is because without a man the cycle of creation would be incomplete. It is the man's sperm that carries the spark of life, and without this vital ignition, the female, left alone to herself, would not be able to reproduce in a natural manner. Since the man harbours this sperm encasing the vital fire of life in the form of genes and energy of life, the man is like a carrier of fire just like the fire pit of the sacred fire sacrifice. The body of a man is always warm, which is a clear and tangible proof of the fire element being inherently present in it.]

His open mouth is like the fuel. [The man speaks and eats through the mouth. The faculty of speech is the abode of the Fire God and the vital wind called Apan is also present in there which helps the man to imbibe food and drink. The body gets its nourishment from the food and drink that the mouth takes in. Therefore, it is like the symbolic fuel of the fire of life continuously burning inside him. It is proved by the fact that when the man stops to eat, his energy and vitality begin to ebb and gradually completely vanish, resulting in his death.]

His Pran (breath) is the smoke (or steam) of this fire, while his speech or the words that he speaks are like the flame of this fire. [The statement that Pran is like smoke can easily be verified when we hold a mirror or any other cold flat surface in front of the nose during winter mornings or nights when the air is extremely cold—a thin film of moisture forms on the surface of the mirror. We can observe this 'smoke' in the form of condensed water vapour in front of the face during cold days when a man exhales. The fact that the speech is like flame of the fire is too obvious for everyone; we have phrases such as 'a fiery speech', or 'spewing fire and brimstone' when a man speaks angrily precisely for this reason. A man's words can rouse the strongest of passions and emotions, and at times great historical changes have occurred because of the potentials of this faculty. Besides this, the Fire God had taken up his residence in the faculty of speech at the time of creation.]

The eyes are like the red hot charcoals or embers, and the ears resemble sparklers flying off from a fiercely burning fire. [This is why an angry man's eyes become red like fire. The fire has the light as its vivid manifestation, and the eyes are the instruments in the body of a man by which he is able to see, and for seeing anything light is an essential requirement. The Sun God is said to have his symbolic abode in the eye and the former is the well known cauldron of cosmic fire. Similarly, the ears hear a constant stream of bits and bits of sound coming in from all the directions of the globe, and therefore they are like the sparklers that hiss and crackle in the fire.]

All the Gods offer oblation of food in this excellent symbolic sacred fire. [The food offered to the fire during the sacrificial ritual is meant for the Gods and they derive their sustenance from it—refer Canto 1, Brahmin 3, verse no. 18. Since the human body is a manifestation of the Viraat Purush, the Gods are not offering anything to a mortal creature, but to that supreme Lord revealed as a man. So the food eaten by the man sustains the Gods residing in his body in a subtle form as the various patron Gods of the sense organs. Thus nourished and propitiated, these Gods bless the man with the boon of fertility, strength, stamina, vigour, vitality and potentials. This enables him to replicate what the Viraat had done at the time of creation—which is to

reproduce in his own kind. That is, the man is able to reproduce in his own likeness, and therefore the progeny is an image of the father. The Som which had been transferred by the Gods to earth by the means of rain and which entered the body of the man through the food eaten by him is ultimately partaken by the Gods residing inside his body.]

From this food is produced the Reta or sperm which is the carrier of the imprint of the man to the next generation. [The Som is the liquid of life and it gets converted into sperms which carry the imprint of the Viraat Purush from one generation to another. This is also the reason why semen is white like the Som which resembles milk.] (12).

[Note—This is the fourth step in the cosmic cycle of creation. The male semen very closely resembles the Som stored in the moon. This is because it contains the ‘spark of life’ in the form of the sperm. This sperm is the ‘seed’ that the Gods had implanted in the womb of Mother Nature represented by the earth. The sperm is like the inflammable tinder which has the potential to start a new fire from the sparklers flying off from a fiercely burning fire. No matter how vigorous and strong a man is, if he cannot reproduce he is considered ‘impotent’ which is regarded as a great curse, more severe than even being physically handicapped; such a man is subject to ridicule and scorn in the society which puts a premium on fertility. In this context, the reader would recall the note to verse no. 8 wherein it is noted the reason why this particular part of the Upanishad was earlier restricted to Kshatriyas. The learned Brahmins were supposed to be renunciate and reclusive, while the Kshatriyas were more inclined towards involvement in worldly pleasures and gratifying their sensual instincts. So the former never yearned for sensual pleasures which are a part of the process of procreation, and hence there was no need for them for gaining such knowledge which was of no use to them. Sages and seers never had harems and they never sired a large brood of children. One was enough for them. On the other hand, the Kshatriyas needed to replace soldiers killed in wars, so replenishment was necessary for them. The importance of food in this context is also highlighted in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 1, Section 11, verse no. 9.]

13. Oh Gautam! The fifth form of the symbolic cosmic sacred fire in creation is the female. [This is like the previous verse. Both the male and the female together make the so-called ‘couple’; even the supreme transcendental Brahm had to reveal itself in two halves in order to initiate the process of creation—refer Canto 1, Brahmin 4, verse no. 3. The female’s body has a striking resemblance to the male body in all respects, including its likeness to the fire, except the reproductive organs which in this case resemble the cosmic womb where the first life form was conceived. To sustain life, the warmth of fire is needed; hence the body of a female is a crucible of fire.]

Her genitals are the fuel of this fire. [The ‘fire’ is the symbolic sacrificial fire of creation, and therefore the genitals are likened to the ‘fuel’ because this is the site that excites, or in other words ‘fuels’ uncontrollable passions in a man, and unless his semen is implanted or offered in it just like the Gods offering their oblations in the sacred fire pit during the cosmic fire sacrificial ritual, the man who personifies the Gods residing in his body in various forms is not satisfied as his sacrifice is not deemed to be complete and it is deemed to be defiled.]

Her hairs, especially the pubic hairs, are like the smoke rising from the fire, the vagina is like the flame, intercourse is like the red hot charcoal or ember, and the sense of titillation and exhilaration derived from it, i.e. from her touch and the actual intercourse, are like the crackling sparklers flying off from a raging fire. [A woman’s long hairs resemble the smoke because they are dark in colour like the smoke. When the woman unties her tresses and waves them, she seems to excite and invite the man

towards the invigorating fire burning near him. Of all her organs, it is the vagina which is aptly likened to the flame of the fire because no matter how steadfast a man is in his vows of celibacy and other stern principles, once he comes into contact with it he is bound to be scorched beyond redemption. Intercourse is the hottest moment in the process of love making and therefore it is like the embers of fire which is being consumed. And finally the surging ecstasy and titillation which fly off in all the veins and nerves of the body are like the sparklers flying off from a raging fire.]

All the Gods offer the Reta (semen or sperm) as an oblation to this sacred fire. [The offering to the sacred fire is in a semi-liquid form resembling the semen which is in turn like the Som offered at the time of the symbolic sacrifice done at the initial stage of creation. The semen also resembles thickened 'milk' such as butter or curd which incidentally has been regarded as the elixir of life much like the Som—refer Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 2. Even as any offering to the sacred fire, if offered with full devotion and faith, bears fruits or gives the desired rewards, this offering of the semen in the womb of the female, if done as a sanctified deed and not to satisfy carnal base instincts, produces excellent results in the form of a new creature in the likeness of the parents.]

A human is produced as a result of this reproductive deed. This human keeps a body (i.e. remains alive) as long as his deeds are not complete (i.e. till the time he himself has not done this symbolic fire sacrifice because he represents the Viraat Purush, or till the time he has not completely consumed the consequences of his past deeds that he has brought down in this life as his baggage from his past life). Then he dies (13).

[Note—This is the fifth step in the cosmic cycle of creation and destruction. This verse read in conjunction with the next verse no. 14 would complete the cycle.]

14. When the man dies, he is taken to be cremated. The sixth and the final form of the symbolic sacred fire in creation is represented by this fire that burns the dead body and liberates the soul. [It is an important part of the cycle of creation because only when the old body is removed from the scene can a new one come into being, as the soul of any single creature cannot exist in two bodies simultaneously. This phase of conclusion of creation marks the last step of creation after which the cycle is repeated.]

Thus, the fire of the funeral pyre is the sacred fire. The fuel used to light this fire is the fuel needed to light the fire of creation. [Usually clarified butter is used as fuel during the cremation process, and it is also used during formal fire sacrifices. Therefore, this clarified butter known as Ghee is like the sanctified liquid of the Gods called Som.]

The smoke rising from firewood used to make the funeral pile represents the smoke coming out from the fire of creation indicating the first signs of life. Its leaping flames are akin to the flames of this sacred fire, its red hot embers are like the charcoal of the pit of the formal fire sacrifice, and its flying sparklers also resemble those coming out from the firewood present in the pit of the fire sacrifice.

In this fire the Gods offered the body of the man as the offering (just as the Viraat Purush had offered himself to the sacred fire in order to start the process of creation). [The cremation is compared here to the sacred fire lit by Brahma the creator at the time of creation in which he offered himself as the offering, which was deemed to be the best form of offering because when one sacrifices himself it is deemed to be the highest form of sacrifice—refer Canto 1, Brahmin 2, verse no. 7. The fire lit for a formal fire sacrifice in which a horse is sacrificed, called the 'Ashwamedh Yagya', is

also symbolic of this sacred ritual, because the 'horse' was one of the first forms that the supreme creator took—refer Canto 1, Brahmin 1.]

Since this is the ultimate form of sacrifice in which one offers himself to the sacred fire, he is blessed with the magnificent glory and radiance of the fire itself. [It is like doing great Tapa (penance and undergoing sufferance for some noble cause) by the Supreme Being himself at the beginning to activate his divine energy with which he undertook the mammoth task of creation—refer Canto 1, Brahmin 2, verse no. 6.] (14)

[Note—This is the last leg of the sacred fire sacrifice done to complete one circle of the cycle of creation and destruction. It should be noted that though there appears to be six distinct steps in this knowledge pertaining to the sacred fire of creation, a close look would establish that there are actually only five—from verse no. 9 to verse no. 14, as this last verse is a sort of an extension of verse no. 13 to link it to the beginning of verse no. 9. This last verse is a sort of conclusion which describes how the last vestiges of the creature's life are completely obliterated from this world and he migrates to the heaven, either to live as God or as the spirit of a dead ancestor (Pittar) till the time he comes back in this world in the form of the nucleus of life called rain. This verse should also ignite intense degree of renunciation in a man because the body, which he has been nourishing for so long and for which he commits such horrible deeds and undergoes the greatest of sufferings, is finally burnt in a fire and reduced to ashes. This verse also establishes a link between the creature's present life and the next. This is because though the body has been burnt, the 'spirit' has already escaped from it and gone up to the heaven to either the abode of Gods, or to the abode of Pittars.

Another interesting observation can be made here. A dead man's body and the wood of the tree that is cut down and used as the firewood for the cremation work are alike in the sense that both are dead, both have a gross and visible form, both belonged to a living being—a man and a tree—and both are offered to the sacred fire in a symbolic sacrifice. When they both get burned, they produce the same type of subsidiaries—such as smoke, flame, light, smell, sparklers and red hot charcoal. Both are reduced to ashes, and both are destroyed for ever. Now the question arises that if the spirit or Atma present in these living entities is eternal and imperishable, then what happens to it? The answer to this question is given by sage Yagyavalkya in Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 28. It is also to be found in the present Brahmin also when a close examination is made of verse nos. 9-16. The spirit or soul of the dead creature takes a certain path depending on a set of circumstances described in these verses and the notes accompanying them. Since a living being's truthful identity is not the body but the soul or Atma or spirit which either gets salvation as described in verse no. 15 or comes back with a new body as described in verse no. 16, it is deemed that the creature has not actually died. What has died is its body and not its true self.

When the man is cremated, his body gets reduced much like the body of the tree whose wood is used for the funeral pile. The son of the man is his fruit and he bears his seeds or genes which he uses to carry forward his line to the next generation when he reproduces and raises a family. Similarly, the tree has fruits, and these fruits have seeds that in turn give birth to new plants which grow into new full blown trees. Therefore, the similarity between the two is very striking indeed.]

15. [The following two verses, i.e. 15 and 16 answer the second and third questions asked by the king in verse no. 2. These questions pertain to the path taken by a creature to the abode of Gods.]

In this way, those people, whether they are householders or forest dwellers who are aware about the importance and significance of this sacred fire of creation and the esoteric and mystical knowledge pertaining to it, and who worship, honour

and admire the supreme Truth with the greatest of devotion, reverence, faith and conviction, become as glorious, holy and divine as the patron God of glory, holiness and divinity. In other words, they attain the same exalted stature as the great God personifying the grand virtues of truthfulness, holiness, faith, devotion and reverence. [This refers to the state which the man obtains when his body has been burnt in the funeral pyre as described in verse no. 14 above. He comes face to face with the reality of the world and the truth about the perishability of the body. He realises that the world he so assiduously loved and worried for suddenly no longer belongs to him, and neither does the world nor his kith and kin wish to have to do anything with his body which they burn or bury without any reluctance as if it was unholy and worthless.]

After that he goes to the abode of the God of the day time (i.e. to the sky above the earth but below the heavens where the Sun lives). From there he passes progressively through the various abodes of different exalted Gods as follows—from the abode of the patron God of the day time he goes to the God of the bright lunar fortnight (i.e. the abode of the Moon God), from there to the six month period of the summer solstice when the Sun is north of the equator, from there to the abode of the Aditya, the Sun God, and from there to the abode of the God of electric (or the abode of the God who is as splendorous, dazzling and radiant as well as powerful, potential and vigorous as the electric).

A divine being (a formless spirit) takes him from there to the abode of the supreme Brahm, called the Brahm Loka. The exalted person who reaches there lives there for a very long time, almost to eternity. He does not have to come back into this world again (15).

[Note—Compare this verse with Canto 5, Brahmin 10. This supreme abode is achievable by a person who has been made pure and glorious by the fire when his body was cremated as described in verse no. 14. In a symbolic manner, the cremation of the body has burnt all the grossness with which the man's holy Atma (Spirit) was earlier bound and shackled. All things mortal are burnt with the body, including all desires and deeds because they are associated with the body and not the Atma. Thus the Atma/Spirit is truthfully liberated. The final deliverance comes when this 'truth' gains firm hold in the mind of this dying man who no longer wishes to have to do anything with the world. A person who has learned the ultimate truth of creation, that this body is perishable and if he takes birth again due to his unfilled desires then he would again find himself being burnt one day by those whom he thinks as his dear and loving, realises that this chain would not give him eternal peace at any cost. When he comes face to face with this truth, he is filled with renunciation and dispassion; he becomes disillusioned with the body as well as the deeds done by it in order to either please itself or others like it. He even begins to see how his loving ones have no qualms in 'burning him'. Such a man is said to have become self-awakened and enlightened in a true sense. So upon death, his 'true' self, i.e. his Atma or soul, is released from the shackle represented by the body. This verse is specifically referring to this soul when it talks about the 'person' because the soul indeed is the true self of any living being. It is this soul which is the person taken to the abode of the supreme Brahm.]

16. [This verse answers the king's second and third questions.]

Those persons who conquer this mortal world (i.e. vanquish their sins and other misdeeds, and die honorably and with dignity) by doing Yagya (religious fire sacrifices; any activity done as a part of religious duty and done for some noble cause), giving Daan (charities, donations, alms and largesse), and observing Tapa (austerity, penance, suffering some kind of hardship for certain noble cause) attain the abode of the patron God of 'Dhum' (smoke)¹.

From here, the man (i.e. his spirit) moves ahead to the abode of the patron God of the night; from there he goes to the abode of the God of the dark lunar fortnight; from there to the patron God of the six months of the winter solstice when the Sun is headed south of the equator; from there to the abode of the Pittars (dead ancestors); and from there to the abode of the Moon God.

There the spirit is consumed by the Gods together with the elixir called Som stored in the moon by them just like the priests consume the sanctified liquid of the same name during fire sacrifice rituals².

When the good effects of all their deeds are exhausted, they (i.e. the spirits of dead persons/creatures/living beings) enter the sky (refer verse no. 9)³. From the higher reaches of the sky, they enter the lower layer and are caught in the wind or air present in the earth's atmosphere. From there they are transferred to the rain (verse no. 10), from there to the earth in the form of food in its very basic atomic form (verse no. 11). The man consumes this food, and it like a symbolic offering made to the sacred fire of creation (because man is likened to this fire—refer verse no. 12).

This man is called a 'Purush' because he is a personification of the creator himself (i.e. the Viraat Purush or Brahma, the patriarch and creator of this visible creation). In order to carry forward the chain of creation, this Purush emerges from the sacrificial fire represented by the womb of a woman (refer verse no. 13).

In this way, much like a comet, the person keeps on going round and round in the cycle of birth and death in this world⁴. Those who are unable to enter any of these paths known as the path of the 'summer solstice' and 'winter solstice' become creatures of the lower animal kingdom such as insects, worms and mosquitoes' (16).

[Note—¹The word *smoke* here refers to the invisible spirit form in which the person is supposed to live for sometime after death before that spirit moves ahead on its journey depending upon its past deeds and inherent Vasanas and Vrittis, i.e. its in-built structure of passions, yearnings and desires as well as the different shades of temperaments, inclinations, habits etc. that decide the nature of the mental setup of the person who has died. Even as a smoke lingers around the fire pit quite for sometime after the fire has died out, the spirit of the man lingers for sometime to decide what path it would prefer to follow if given a choice—it observes its body being reduced to ashes, it sees how the people whom it had called its own kith and kin start hankering and fighting about the wealth left behind by the dead man, how they wish to capture it by employing unscrupulous methods, and how they undo the legacy that the dead man has taken a entire life-time to build. This observation fills the spirit with a profound sense of disenchantment and renunciation with this world. Now, if this is sincere, then even in this late state it can make its transit to the abode of Brahm as described in verse no. 15, but if it decides to come back and settle scores, or reclaim its assets and glories, or finish the unfinished tasks, or enjoy the world which it could not fully enjoy with its previous body, it takes the path described in this verse and comes back to this world.

There is another interpretation of this state of existence of the dead man's spirit. The word smoke also indicates a 'comet' consisting of vapour and rock. So this man's spirit literally roams around the world in the form of a comet, going far and then coming back for a revisit. This is a metaphor for the abode of the Pittars, i.e. of the spirit of dead ancestors mentioned in verse no. 2. In traditional folklore, the sighting of a comet is regarded as the visit of some dead ancestor.

²The moon is traditionally believed to be the pitcher of Amrit which is the ambrosia of Gods. It is called Som and the moon derives its another name 'Som' for this very reason. Now, Som is the invigorating drink of the Gods which they drink to remain eternal, powerful, energetic, authoritative and blissful. The spirit of the man has plunged into this cooling liquid much like a thirsty fish takes to water. It must be remembered that the man is not in any physical form now, but in a very miniscule

form, a microscopic and atomic unit called the spirit. When the Gods drink it, the spirit enters them. To visualise how this is brought about we can take the example of curd—this viscous liquid is a product of liquid milk but is teeming with countless bacteria which are benign in nature. Likewise, this spirit also becomes the ‘food’ of the Gods. When the Gods perform the symbolic fire sacrifice to start the next generation of creation, this spirit is passed down as the sperm floating in the Som-like semen. This divine sperm takes the form of the rain in the cloud which is like the celestial semen. From there, the process is outlined in the next stanza of this verse.

The liquid drunk by the priests is ‘milk’ which has been traditionally treated as Som of the human beings because it has all the nourishing and invigorating properties of Som. It is this milk that symbolically forms the semen in which the sperm floats.

³When someone eats or drinks anything, he has to eliminate its residual part after digesting the food or drink. In this particular case, the Gods excrete the spirit that had entered their bodies along with the Som they had drunk. This excreta forms the ‘seed’ or nucleus around which the rain-bearing clouds form; the spirit ‘seeds’ the clouds in the form of rain and then when this rain falls upon the earth, they come down to ‘seed’ the earth as food. This food then ‘seeds’ the semen as its vitality and potency in the form as its sperm; this latter entity finally ‘seeds’ the female to produce the ‘tree’ in the shape of the living organism. The ‘seed’ of this new tree would be in its fruit; that is why the son is regarded as the ‘fruit’ bearing the ‘seed’ of the parent.

⁴This path outlined in verse nos. 15 and 16 are the two paths which humans take upon death as asked by the king in verse no. 2 in the beginning of this Brahmin.]

Canto 6, Brahmin 3

[This Brahmin describes the detailed process of preparing the ‘Manth’. This is an admixture of various herbs and spices which are finely grounded and vigorously churned with a liquid to prepare the offering to be made to the sacred fire of the sacrifice. As is evident, the Manth is required for the fire sacrifice that is done in this world and is not required for the one done by the Gods because the latter type is symbolic in nature and done in a subtle manner. The fire sacrifice done by humans has certain objectives in mind, such as worldly gains and fulfillment of other desires including the attainment of heaven. Therefore this Manth acquires great value, because if it is not prepared properly and systematically and in the prescribed manner it would fail to deliver even as an improperly made medical prescription can not cure the disease.]

1. A person who wishes to attain fame, glory, majesty, importance, significance, supremacy, greatness, honour, grandeur, credence and ascension, collectively called ‘Mahattva’, should follow the following procedure. He should select any auspicious day between the first and twelfth day of the bright lunar fortnight when the sun is in the summer solstice. He should prepare himself by abstaining from food (i.e. by observing fast) and subsisting only on liquids such as milk and water. The offerings to the sacred consecrated fire should be collected in a large pot or bowl made of wood from the Gular tree (the wild fig tree). The ingredients for the offering consist of essential herbs, fruits and other items.

Thereafter, the fire pit and the altar should be properly cleaned and smeared or plastered. [For sweeping and general cleaning, a broom of Kush grass, which is a dark green grass, is employed, while for plastering, cow dung is considered because it is regarded as holy]. Then the holy fire is ceremoniously lit or established in the fire pit.

A seating mat made of Kush grass should be placed in the front of the pit, and it is upon this mat that the person doing the fire sacrifice sits. Clarified butter, called Ghee, should be sanctified and empowered with mystical powers by invoking the Mantras of the 'Griha Sutra'. [The 'Griha Sutra' consists of six verses of two lines each, and appears in the Paippalaad branch of Atharva Veda. This Sutra (hymn or formula) is invoked for the general welfare and well being of the household.]

When the time is auspicious, that is during those Nakshatras (constellations or asterisms) which have a male gender (such as Hasta, Pushya etc.), the person should pick up the Manth (the admixture prepared for the sacrifice), which is placed between him and the fire, in the wooden spoon (a ladle-like implement called Struva or Struwa) and offer it to the sacred fire. While doing so, he should pronounce the following two Mantras with great faith and devotion—

(a) 'Yawanto Devastwayi Jatvedstiryancho Dhananti Purushasya Kaman; Tebhyoaham Bhagdheyam Juhomi Te Ma Triptaha Sarweha Kaamestrpayantu Swaha'. The meaning of this Mantra is 'Oh Fire God! All those mischievous Gods who live in you, i.e. all the negative factors that are associated with fire such as its tendency to burn even the good things in this world, and who create hindrance in a man's successful completion of his enterprise, I offer this oblation to them. Let them be satisfied and pleased with me. Let them fulfill my wishes (by not creating unnecessary obstacles in my progress, and on the contrary helping me in my endeavours)'. After this the word Swaha should be said and the Manth is offered to the sacred fire. [This word Swaha is said after every offering to the sacred fire, and it is said that it is the mouth of the Fire God.]

(b) The second Mantra is the following—'Trianchi Nipadyateaham Vidharani Iti Tam Twa Ghrityasya Dharaya Yaje Santraadhanimahant Swaha'. The meaning of this Mantra is as follows—'That haughty and wicked God who proudly believes that he bears the responsibilities for causing the death of all living beings lives with you in your abode. He is also able to provide everything needed by a man. I offer my worship him in order to propitiate and please him by offering a continuous stream of Ghee (clarified butter). Let him be contented and propitiated and pleased'. Saying this, the previously sanctified Ghee should be poured into the sacrificial fire pit while saying 'Swaha' (1).

[Note—*Swaha* is the word pronounced at the time of actual offering after the Mantra has been said because it is regarded as the mouth of the sacred fire.

Manth means to grind and mix or churn vigorously special herbs, spices, roots, stems, leaves, aromatics chemicals and auspicious liquids such as honey, molasses, milk, curd etc. to form a viscous jelly-like concoction that is offered to the sacred fire during a sacrifice. Verse no. 13 of this Brahmin describes its ingredients in detail.]

2. The aspirant then offers clarified butter to the sacred fire with these two Mantras-- 'Jyeshthaye Swaha', meaning 'Oh the senior most God, I offer this oblation for you in the consecrated sacred fire', and 'Sreshthaye Swaha', meaning 'Oh the best and most exalted God, I offer this oblation for you in the consecrated sacred fire'. After this, the left over clarified butter present in the wooden spoon is wiped off into the Manth previously prepared according to verse no. 1 above.

The next two oblations (i.e. the third and the fourth) to the sacred fire are done with these two Mantras—'Pranaye Swaha', meaning 'I offer my Pran to the consecrated sacred fire', and 'Vashishtaye Swaha', meaning 'I offer all the best that I have to the consecrated sacred fire'. Again all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next two oblations (i.e. the fifth and the sixth) to the sacred fire are done with these two Mantras—‘Vak Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer my faculty of speech to the consecrated sacred fire’, and ‘Pratisthaye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer all the honours, dignity, majesties and glories that I have to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next two oblations (i.e. the seventh and the eighth) to the sacred fire are done with these two Mantras—‘Chakshushe Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer my faculty of sight to the consecrated sacred fire’, and ‘Sampade Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer all the worldly and heavenly assets and wealth that I have to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next two oblations (i.e. the ninth and the tenth) to the sacred fire are done with these two Mantras—‘Srotraye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer my faculty of hearing to the consecrated sacred fire’, and ‘Ayatanaye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer all the worldly and heavenly means of shelter and refuge as well as all the supports and basic roots that I have to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next two oblations (i.e. the eleventh and the twelfth) to the sacred fire are done with these two Mantras—‘Manase Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer my faculty of intellect and mind to the consecrated sacred fire’, and ‘Prajatye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer all my subjects in the form of near and dear ones, such as my family, kith and kin, contacts and companions etc. that I have to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The final oblation (i.e. the thirteenth one) to the sacred fire is done with this Mantra—‘Retse Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer my potentials, powers and ability to procreate, my strength, vigour, vitality, virility and stamina, to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth (2).

[Note—It must be understood that these are symbolic offerings. One need not cut off his ears, for example, to offer them to the fire. If sincerity is there, then merely saying is enough.]

3. The next set of Mantras while offering oblations to the consecrated sacred fire are the following in a sequential manner, the first being—‘Agnaye Swaha’, meaning ‘Oh Fire God, I offer this oblation for you in the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (second) Mantra is—‘Somaye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant for the Som God to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (third) Mantra is—‘Bhu Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant for the mortal world represented by earth to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (fourth) Mantra is—‘Bhuvaha Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant for the world between the earth and the heavens to the consecrated sacred fire’.

Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (fifth) Mantra is—‘Swah Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant for the heavens to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (sixth) Mantra is—‘Bhu Bhurvaha Swah Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant for all the living beings that inhabit the three legendary worlds consisting of the mortal world represented by the earth, the celestial world represented by the sky, and the heavens, to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (seventh) Mantra is—‘Brahminaye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant for the exalted Brahmins to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (eighth) Mantra is—‘Kshatraye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant for the Kshatriyas to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (ninth) Mantra is—‘Bhutaye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant to represent all that has happened in the past to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (tenth) Mantra is—‘Bhavishaye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant to represent all that would happen in the future to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (eleventh) Mantra is—‘Vishwaye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant for the entire creation or universe or worlds to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (twelfth) Mantra is—‘Sarwaye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant to represent everything that exists for me to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth.

The next (thirteenth) Mantra is—‘Prajapatye Swaha’, meaning ‘I offer this oblation meant for the Prajapati (the creator of the world and its care taker) to the consecrated sacred fire’. Once again, all the remaining clarified butter sticking to the wooden spoon/ladle should be scooped off into the Manth (3).

4. Next, the aspirant reverentially touches the Manth already made and put in the pot meant for it and to which the clarified butter has been added after each offering to the sacred fire as described in verse nos. 2-3, and says the following Mantras—‘Bhramdasi’ and ‘Jwaladasi’ etc. which mean the following—‘You are subtly active and mobile, and can go from place to place because you are like the Pran or the vital wind which supports life in this world, is present everywhere and moves unhindered from one place to another’. ‘You are dazzling and splendid, radiant and glorious, fiery and brilliant because you personify the fire element’. ‘You are complete and wholesome because you represent the supreme Brahm who is complete in all

respects'. 'You are immobile and steady like the sky element'. 'You are like a friendly assembly or religious congregation of like minded people in this world because you are benevolent and benign towards all'.

'In the beginning of the fire sacrifice it is you who is invoked or invited by the priest called Prastota (i.e. the priest who symbolically invites the Gods and offers them their respective seats during the sacrifice), and it is you who is worshipped and honoured by the priest. You are the deity that is worshipped and honoured by Udgata priest when he sings the hymns of the Vedas, called Udgith (sung at the beginning of the fire sacrifice rituals as well as during the course of it). The priests known as Adhvaryu and Agnidhra offer you to the sacred fire as the sanctified offering to it.

You are present in the rain bearing clouds as its lightening. You are honoured by the epithet 'Vibhu' meaning one who is supreme, almighty and majestic as well as one who has innumerable virtues and stupendous glories, and one who can exist in uncountable number of forms. You are called 'Prabhu' implying that you represent the Supreme Being who is the Lord of everything and who is capable of doing anything, being omnipotent and almighty. You are a personification of food because you sustain life and provide nourishment to the entire creation; you are an embodiment and fount of light and splendour; and you are death personified at the same time. [In other words, you personify Brahm who encompasses everything in this creation and who stands for the greatest of paradoxes in creation—such as being a sustainer of life on the one hand and the annihilator of the same on the other.] Indeed, as the vanquisher and slayer of all that exist, you are the dooms day personified' (4).

[Note—It must be noted that this Manth is not an ordinary concoction of different herbs and spices as such but a especially empowered and blessed vehicle of life bearing potentials. When it is put into the fire, it gradually douses it indicating that it has the potentials to even annihilate such potential and powerful forces as represented by the fiercely burning fire. The use of various Mantras infuses this Manth with special mystical potentials and powers that renders it from being simply a admixture to something that has astounding potentials and charged with divine energy and endowed with supernatural powers.]

5. The pot containing the consecrated Manth is now picked up and the Mantras beginning with 'Amansi', meaning 'You (the Manth) are all-knowing and omniscient', are said. The remaining part of the Mantra means 'I am well aware of your astounding greatness, your glories, your potentials and your majestic powers. This Pran (i.e. the life factor present inside the body of the aspirant) is the king or sovereign; it is the Lord God, and it is the undisputed ruler of all that lives and exists in this world. Let it (the Pran) bless me with similar potentials and authority so that I too become like a king, a sovereign, a Lord and an undisputed ruler over my subjects' (5).

[Note—In other words, the aspirant prays to the consecrated Manth which has been especially empowered with mystical and divine powers when it is honoured during the fire sacrifice to bless him that he is empowered with all the magnificent potentials and authority exhibited by the vital force of universal life known as Pran. The aspirant requests divine intercession so that he never faces any problems in life due to lack of vigour, vitality, strength, stamina, potentials, authority and other vital forces of life that are most essential for leading a productive, fruitful and contented life.]

6. The specially empowered Manth should be now divided into four equal parts and eaten as four mouthfuls. With each mouthful, one Mantra is to be pronounced as described below.

The first Mantra has five sections as follows—(a) ‘Tatsaviturvarnyam’—meaning ‘I remember with greatest devotion and reverence the exalted stature of the Sun God which is supremely splendid and radiant’; (b) ‘Madhvata Ritayate’—meaning ‘There is a pleasant and sweet breeze blowing’; (c) ‘Madhksharanti Sindhavha’—meaning ‘The rivers, especially the Indus (Sindhu), are producing an eternal supply of honey; or honey is flowing out from the Indus river in an endless stream of life in the form of water’; (d) ‘Madhvira Santswoshadhi’—meaning ‘Let the medicinal herbs be sweet for us’; and (e) ‘Bhu Swaha’—meaning ‘I offer this oblation to the patron deity of the terrestrial world’.

Saying this first Mantra, the aspirant should gulp down the first quarter of the Manth in one mouthful.

The second Mantra has the following five sections—(a) ‘Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi’—meaning ‘I accept the divine mystical powers that are as splendid and radiant as the Sun God that has the potential of destroying all my sins and misdeeds and their cumulative effects’; (b) ‘Madhu Naktamutoshashi’—meaning ‘Let the nights and the days be auspicious, pleasant and comfortable for me’; (c) ‘Madhu Matparthivanth-rajaha’—meaning ‘Let the soil and dust of the earth be sweet, pleasant and fertile for me’; (d) ‘Madhu Dyorastu Naha Pita’—meaning ‘Let the heavens which are like a father for us (because the supreme Father lives there) be pleasant and comfortable for us; let it be favourable for me’; (e) ‘Bhuvaha Swaha’—meaning ‘I offer this oblation to all the patron deities of the celestial worlds’.

Saying this second Mantra, the aspirant should gulp down the second quarter of the Manth in one mouthful.

The third Mantra has the following five sections—(a) ‘Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat’—meaning ‘Let the divine Sun God inspire and direct my mind and intellect towards the righteous, auspicious and noble path’; (b) ‘Madhu Maanno Vanaspatiha’—meaning ‘Let the vegetation and all the plants be like honey (sweet, energising and life sustaining) for me’; (c) ‘Madhu Maa Astu Surya’—meaning ‘Let the Sun be sweet and pleasant for me; let it be benign and benevolent upon me’; (d) ‘Madhvira Bhavantu Naha’—meaning ‘Let the cows give sweet-as-honey milk’; (e) ‘Swah Swaha’—meaning ‘I offer this oblation to that all the patron deities of the heavenly worlds’.

Saying this third Mantra, the aspirant should gulp down the third quarter of the Manth in one mouthful.

Finally he should say the entire Savitri Mantra or the Gayatri Mantra (Canto 5, Brahmin 14) followed by ‘Ahamevedant Sarvam Bhuyaasam’—meaning ‘Let me become a personification of all the eclectic virtues, all the divine glories and all the majestic powers displayed by all the patron deities who preside over this fire sacrifice; let me be empowered with all the stupendous powers and potentials that are attainable by this sacrifice’.

After this pronunciation, he should gulp down the remaining fourth quarter of the Manth with the following Mantra ‘Bhu Bhruvaha Swah Swaha’—meaning ‘I offer my greatest of reverence and homage to all the deities who preside over the three legendary worlds, i.e. the mortal world, the celestial world and the heavenly world, by offering this oblation to them’.

Having partaken of the entire Manth as described above, he should then wash off his hands and lie down to rest on the rear side of the fire pit (western corner) with his head towards the east.

Next morning when the sun rises, he should pray to the Sun God with the following Mantra—‘Dishamekpundrikmasyaham Manushyanamekpundrikam

Bhuyaasamati', meaning 'You are like the red and blooming lotus flower whose petals have spread in all the directions in the form of your rays. Bless me so that I too become like this lotus amongst the humans'. The aspirant should pay his respects to the divine Sun God with this Mantra. [In other words, the aspirant requests the Sun God to bless him with the boon that he acquires honourable name and fame so that his renown and glory can spread in all the corners of the world just like the rays of the Sun spread out from it and light the entire visible world. Let he be blessed with the same potentials and powers as that possessed by this heavenly Sun that would empower him to sustain and nourish all the subjects who depend upon him and look up to him for their solace and succour, for their shelter, refuge, sustenance and help. Let him be divinely blessed so that his deeds become so righteous and auspicious that they make him shine in this terrestrial like the Sun shines amongst all the heavenly bodies in the celestial world. In brief, the patron pleads with the Sun God to make him as exalted amongst the humans as that God is amongst the heavenly beings.]

Having offered the above prayers to the Sun God, he should go back by the same direction from which he had come in to do the sacrifice, and then sit in the western direction of the fire pit to say the next prayer consisting of the list of wise sages who had previously done this special fire sacrifice to invoke their blessings and empower the Manth with divine powers by which they had themselves derived such stupendous dominance, sway, clout and authority over all the rest of the world. These Mantras also describe the magnificent potentials and mystical divine powers of this Manth (6).

7. This special process of doing the fire sacrifice to infuse the Manth with stupendous, mystical, eclectic, dynamic and divine authority, powers and potentials, thereby making it very powerful, was first preached by Uddalak, the son of sage Aurn, to his disciple Vajsaneya Yagyavalkya. At that time he had proclaimed about the astounding and almost magical potentials of this Manth by saying that if it was put on a dry stump of a tree, it would sprout new branches and leaves (7).

8. Vajsaneya Yagyavalkya had preached this knowledge to his disciple Madhuk Paingya. At that time he had extolled the grand virtues of this Manth by saying 'If anyone would put this Manth on a dry stump of a tree, it would sprout new branches and leaves' (8).

9. Madhuk Paingya had preached this knowledge to his disciple Bhagvitti Chul. At that time he had lauded the magnificent virtues of this Manth by saying that if anyone would put this Manth on a dry stump of a tree, it would sprout new branches and leaves (9).

10. Bhagvitti Chul had preached this knowledge to his disciple Janki Ayasthun. At that time he had praised the glorious virtues of this Manth by saying 'If anyone would put this Manth on a dry stump of a tree, it would sprout new branches and leaves' (10).

11. Janki Ayasthun had preached this knowledge to his disciple Satyakam Jabal. At that time he had eulogized the marvelous mystical virtues of this Manth by saying that if anyone would put this Manth on a dry stump of a tree, it would sprout new branches and leaves (11).

12. Satyakam Jabal had preached this knowledge to his disciples who resided with him in his hermitage. At that time he had summarised the astounding mystical powers of this Manth by telling them ‘If anyone would put this Manth on a dry stump of a tree, it would sprout new branches and leaves. The process of sanctifying this Manth and empowering it with mystical divine powers should not be divulged to an incompetent or ineligible person though he may be a son or a disciple’ (12).

13. This entire procedure of making the Manth is completed by using four implements made from the wood of the wild fig tree. These four implements are—(a) a spoon, a ladle or a spatula; (b) a bowl or a pot; (c) a pestle and the grinding rod; and (d) firewood. [Though the firewood is strictly used as a fuel for the fire sacrifice and not to make the implements needed to prepare the concoction known as Manth, but it nevertheless is an essential and unavoidable component of the entire exercise because the Manth would get its powers only when a fire sacrifice is done in the prescribed manner in this Brahmin.]

Ten types of food grains are used in its preparation—rice, barley, sesame seeds, horse beans, strawberry seeds, Indian millet, wheat, lentils, maize/corn, and horse beans.

All of them are finely ground and mixed with honey and clarified butter (called Ghee) to form a thick semi-liquid concoction which is used to offer oblations to the consecrated sacred fire. This concoction is the Manth that is divinely empowered and eaten by the aspirant as described in this Brahmin (13).

Canto 6, Brahmin 4

[This Brahmin describes the entire process of reproduction cycle. Since this cycle of creation is like one big fire sacrifice (refer Canto 6, Brahmin 2, verse no. 9-14), and since reproduction is an important step in it, therefore this reproductive process is also to be treated as one offering into the cosmic fire sacrifice. This reproduction process is a vital link in the chain because without it the process cannot move forward. It is hence not to be regarded as an instrument for fulfillment of carnal instincts but as a divine mandate having all the elements of religiosity and sacredness associated with a fire sacrifice. With this perspective, one gets the bliss and contentedness, the happiness and joys of participating in a holy sacrifice and fulfilling the divine mandate of the supreme Lord instead filling guilty of indulging in sensual gratification of carnal desires. After all, the Upanishads cannot teach one to be passionate, libidinous and lustful. Refer Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, 15 of the Rig Veda tradition in this context; it has been published separately in this series.]

1. The earth is like the essence or sap or juice of the five elements called Panch Bhuts (the others being fire, water, air and sky) because it is the earth that forms the basis and foundation upon which the entire edifice of life rests. It is the earth that harbours life in all its myriad forms and vibrant colours and manifestations. Without earth no life can exist in this creation as is proved by the fact that though there are numerous rounded planets in this universe resembling earth but none harbours life in any form; they are merely barren rocky or gaseous globes floating in the cosmos. Since the living being is made up of the five fundamental elements in creation, therefore it is

deemed that the earth is the most important and significant amongst them. The phrase 'essence or juice or sap like' is a metaphoric way of giving importance and value to the earth element as the basic and unavoidable ingredient in Nature without which the rest of the edifice would disintegrate and vanish into oblivion.

The essence or sap or juice of earth is the Apaha or water element. This is because without water the earth would also become as barren and rocky globe as the other planets where no life exists. The glories of earth and its beauty lies in its ability to nourish and harbour an astounding array of vibrant life forms, but water is an essential requirement for it as evident in deserts where no life can survive although all the other ingredients are available there. So metaphorically, water is the 'sap' or 'juice' of life.

The life-giving essential property of water is manifested in the form of the medicinal herbs, because these herbs also inject a new lease of life in a diseased body which would have perished (died due to the illness) without them. Therefore, these herbs are like the metaphoric juice or sap or essence or nectar of water.

The flowers are like the essence or sap or juice or nectar of these medicinal herbs because without the flowers no pollens would be produced and no new plants can be grown. Besides this, the flowers produce nectar which is transformed into honey which is another metaphor for life with all its vibrancy, sweetness, virility and vigour. Aside of this, the herbs are recognised by their flowers, and therefore these flowers are like the symbolic sap which helps one to decide which herb to take and which to reject.

The fruit is metaphoric personification of the essence or sap or juice or nectar of the flower because the flower is the harbinger of the fruit; it is in the flower that the fruit of any tree has its basis. The fruit literally draws its sap or essential juice from the flower's nectar and not the other way round. The flowers appear before the fruits on a tree. The fruit contains all the best that the tree has to offer in terms of nourishment and sustenance for life on this earth. Besides this, the fruit has the seed that forms the basis of the next generation of that tree. The fruit is literally the 'offspring' of the flower. It is well known that flowers are of two types—male and female, but the fruit is not.

The Purush (literally a male; a man) is like the sap or essential life giving properties present in the fruit personified; he is an embodiment of all the nourishments that are present in fruit; he represents the essence of fruit and its magnificent life sustaining values. This is because a man produces the sperm, the 'seed', just like the fruit. The man eats fruits (or for that matter any vegetable or plant product) and derives all his dynamism, vitality, vigour, strength and stamina from the nourishing properties of the fruit he has eaten. These virtues and qualities present in man are in essence the glorious potentials and powers of fruit on vivid display. Both represent the glorious reward obtained by the Gods by their doing the fire sacrifice for creation.

Finally, the essential life giving forces and cosmic energy of creation, which have undergone repeated transformations and distillations from one form to another as described above, reveal themselves in the form of the 'Reta' or the sperm present in the vital juice of man in the form of his semen. [Therefore, this semen of a man is like the juice of the fruit of a tree. The essential nutrition in the fruit's juice is represented by the sperm present in the semen; this semen is a metaphor for stamina, strength, virility, potency, fertility, vitality and vigour that the hallmarks of life in this creation. The opposite of it would be death and darkness. The sperm is the 'seed' of the fruit of the tree represented by the man.] (1).

2. Prajapati decided to create an appropriate habitat or a dwelling place where the sperm can be placed. With this purpose in mind, he created the woman and consecrated her lower parts (i.e. her genitals) and prepared them to accept the offering of the male sperm which was then offered to it even as the oblation is made to the pit of the sacrificial fire. That is why even today a woman is adored and worshipped as the one who gives refuge and shelter to everyone, i.e. as a mother of the entire creative process and the creation¹.

Having created the female genitals to accept his sperms when he would eject it, he elongated his male phallus which was as rigid and sturdy as a hardened rock towards the female to transfer his virtues of vitality, vigour, stamina, abilities and strength represented by the male sperm into the womb of the female².

By establishing his essence, i.e. his sperm, into the female, Prajapati was able not only to perpetrate his creation but also established the glory and importance of womanhood in this world³ (2).

[Note--¹A mother is more loving and considerate than the father; her tenderness of heart and her compassion and kindness is legendary as compared to the male. A woman is more sentimental and emotional; she would be easily moved by pain and misery of the world than the male. This is because she has been created with the specific purpose of being a shelter and a provider of refuge to the shelter-less and those who are ejected from their natural habitat just like the male sperm which is thrown off by the male but accepted by the female. And not only that, this powerful instrument symbolising strength, vigour, vitality and stamina would have gone to waste and its astounding potentials never seen the light of day had it not been for the woman who had given it refuge in her womb, nourished it with her own blood, and then brought it forth in this world to shine in its glory. That is why a son owes more to his mother than he does to his father because the latter had actually ejected his son when he was in his primary form as a sperm from his own natural dwelling in the body of the father, and then he was given refuge by the mother who not only accepted the rejected and cast out sperm but also had given it loving care and nourished it back to life.

²This was symbolically like extending the spoon with a long handle towards the fire pit and then offering the oblation of the Manth mentioned above in Brahmin 3 to the consecrated fire. The spoon resembles the male phallus while the semen is like the Manth.

³By transferring the sperm into the womb of the female, the creator Prajapati was able to establish a link between himself and Nature represented by the female. Further, since the female was able to accept the immensely powerful and energised essence emerging from the supreme creator, she was deemed to be very powerful and potent herself because only someone who is equal in strength and potent can ever hope to accept the burden thrown by one's opponent. Had it not been so, the sperm would have crashed into her and reduced her to smithereens even as a bolt of lightning falling upon a mountain can cause huge pieces of boulders to crumble to dust. This singular event helped to establish the astounding and magnificent glory of a woman.]

3. [This verse draws a parallel between the female genitals and a fire sacrifice pit. Refer Canto 6, Brahmin 2, verse no. 13.]

The female genitalia is the altar of the fire sacrifice; her pubic hair represent the seating mat (made of Kush grass in front of the sacred fire; the central part (i.e. the vagina and uterus) is like blazing fire in the centre of the fire pit; and the clitoris is like the fuel or firewood that keeps it alive and burning.

A symbolic sacrifice (i.e. intercourse) done by an aspirant with this wisdom and enlightened view gives the same benefit and rewards as are derived from doing the 'Vajpaye Yagya' (i.e. a special type of fire sacrifice done to propitiate the supreme creator and invoke his blessings to propagate one's own glory). A person who engages himself in sexual activity with this sublime and holy outlook, and who treats the entire exercise as one big fire sacrificial ritual, is able to acquire all the benefits that a woman has to offer (i.e. such a person is able to derive not only sexual satisfaction but not feel guilty about it). [Here, the female is regarded as a medium which helps the man, who is regarded as the Prajapati here, to perform the cosmic fire sacrifice that initiated the process of creation because the entire process basically needs a fire pit where the fire burns (female genitals) and to which offerings are made (sperm, semen). She is regarded as the sacrificial pit into which the male offers the oblation of his sperms. In the actual fire sacrifice, this offering of sperm is represented by the offering of the Manth.]

On the contrary, if this exercise is indulged with grossness of mind, with pervert outlook and depraved obsession for sexual gratification, then it leads to complete destruction and ruin even as any contact with fire is destructive and ruinous for the man; the fire, if not handled with due care, would burn everything that the man possesses, including himself (3).

4. There were three ancient sages who are regarded as experts in this science. They were Uddalak, the son of Aruni, Maudgalya and Kumar Harit. They asserted that there are numerous foolish and ignorant Brahmins who do not know anything about the divine, ethereal and sublime aspect of this symbolic fire sacrifice related to the process of creation. Under the guise of doing a sacrifice, they lose the self restraint and auspicious nature which is expected of them as a Brahmin, and instead indulge in the sexual act to satisfy their carnal desires. As a result, they get fallen from their natural and traditionally exalted stature, and become impersonators who are denigrated, demoted and degenerated.

If by chance a man's semen is ejaculated in small or large quantity, either while he is awake during the day or while he is asleep during the night, before the wife's menses, then he should atone for this sin of wasting the sacred offering meant for the sacred fire sacrifice of creation by letting it go to waste. [It is a similar sin as letting sanctified milk or any other offering meant for the Gods to spill over and fall to the ground. This is equivalent to sacrilege and defiling of the sanctified liquid meant for the Fire God.] To repent for this incontinence, one should adopt (follow) the method described in the next verse (4).

[Note—During formal fire sacrifices, the patron is expected to observe the strictest of vows of abstinence and continence, exercising self restraint in all manners of thoughts and deeds. If this stern vow is not kept, then the whole exercise goes to the wind and no fruit accrues to him. On the contrary, it is punishable offense and the patron suffers a lot of hardship later on in his life. This is why it is very difficult to successfully complete a fire sacrifice without any unwarranted happenings. So, if one treats the sexual exercise as a fire sacrifice, then all the formalities have to be rigidly followed for any benefit to accrue. Otherwise, it would be ruinous for the man and would only pull him down instead of lifting him in his spiritual progress.]

5. The man should touch the ejaculated semen with his hands and sincerely regret for his incontinence. He should express his regrets in the following manner—'This semen which has fallen on the earth now as well as on any previous occasions when it might have inadvertently fallen upon any water body or plant or herbs (i.e. if it had polluted

the earth, water and the plant life), I wish to retrieve it and accept it back once again'. [That is, I am sorry that the symbolic offering that was meant for the fire sacrifice represented by the sexual exercise has been spilled due to my lack of self control and vigil.]

With this Mantra, he should lift the fallen semen with his thumb and third finger, and then smear it on his chest or between his two eyebrows. He should say— 'My vital powers, energy, strength, stamina, vitality and vigour had inadvertently gone out of me; let it come back to me! Let my energy and vitality as well as my good fortune and privilege of being able to bear this glorious symbolic Manth meant for the sacred fire sacrifice come back to me. Let the Fire God and other Gods reinstate them back into me at the proper designated place' (5).

6. Then he should see his reflection in water with the following Mantras—'Let the Gods empower and bless me with energy and glory, vitality and vigour, majesty and grandeur, and prosperity and success. Let them inspire me towards righteous and auspicious deeds'.

Then he should liberally praise his wife, saying, 'My wife is like Laxmi amongst women, i.e. she is like the Goddess of wealth and prosperity who is the divine consort of Vishnu, the sustainer, personified'.

The man should approach that auspicious lady, who is chaste, pure and immaculate like a clean and washed piece of cloth, with an equally clean, peaceful and pure heart and mind. He should not go to any other woman under any circumstances (6).

7. If the woman (i.e. the wife) does not surrender willingly, then the man should appease her by giving presents that she is fond of (such as jewelry, clothes or any such thing for which she has a fancy), and subtly express his passions for her. If she still does not volunteer to submit herself to him, then he should show certain degree of sternness and firm resolve to force her into submission. For this purpose he should say to her—'If you do not consent, then I would divert my mind and senses from you and hitch them elsewhere. I can snatch you of the privilege of having been fortunate enough to have attracted my attention, which if diverted elsewhere would have the effect of demoralizing and demoting your self esteem and dignity in the eyes of others'.

This would have the affect that the woman would submit herself to him fearing ignominy and neglect (7).

8. When the woman (wife) has surrendered herself, the man should bless her, saying, 'I am establishing my famous potentials, strength, vitality, vigour, energy, stamina, virtues, glory and dignity in you (through implanting my sperms in your body)'.

This sanctified procedure gives both of them fame and glory (8).

9. When the woman (wife) agrees, the man should embrace her and make love to her. He should invoke the patron God of love and passion and say the following prayer— 'Oh Kamdeo-cupid, the Lord of love! Oh God of love and passions! You manifest yourself when the two organs (genitals) meet each other as well as when the two hearts are compatible with each other. [This indicates that the conjugal relationship is a two way voluntary process and not something imposed by the stronger partner upon the weaker or meeker one. No physical force is condoned.] You represent the essence and juice extracted from my entire body (because the male semen represents the

distilled form of the grandest virtues of a man, such as the best of vitality, energy and other life-giving forces present in his body). Make this woman extremely passionate and agitated as a she-deer who has become restless upon being hit by a poisonous arrow and submit herself to me, seeking some way from me to alleviate her sufferings. [In other words, let her surrender to me and fall in my control, leaving herself to my discretion and command, doing what I tell her to do, even as a wounded she-deer would want her wounds healed at any cost.] (9).

[Note--Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition, verse no. 57-64 in this context. This Upanishad has been included in the volume dealing with the Upanishads of the Sam Veda in this series.]

10. In case the man wishes that the woman should not conceive during the intercourse, then after the initial steps, just prior to the time of ejaculation at the culmination of intercourse, he should do 'Pranayam', i.e. he should withhold the ejaculation of semen through the process of 'Pranan' and 'Apanan' which entails withholding the Pran wind (i.e. the breath) and simultaneously pulling up the Apan wind (i.e. the vital wind moving down the intestines)¹.

Then he should make the following solemn resolve—'Oh woman! I am accepting in me your Reta or vital reproductive energy through my own Reta or semen by using my organs (the male organ which is already inside the female organ, thereby making this virtual sucking process successful)²'. If this is done properly and in a sanctified manner, then the female is not able to conceive (10).

[Note—¹Refer to Sam Veda tradition's Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 57-58 and Jabal Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 33 in this context. These Upanishads have been included in the volume dealing with the Upanishads of the Sam Veda in this series.

²A lot of imagination is needed to understand and visualise what is meant here. The semen is withheld by meditative practices known as 'Pranan and Apanan'. The male organ is already inserted in the female organ much like a hose pipe inside the tank of water. Thus, when the man wishes to withhold the semen he can easily turn off the tap on his end, and to ensure sure hit non-conception he can even suck the vaginal and uterus fluids back into his own organ by a sucking process usually employed in emptying a tank full of water using a pipe, and then spit it out. This is not an abstract idea but actually can be implemented in practice, but the question arises how many people have that level of expertise as described in ancient texts to actually do it? It should be noted that this verse describes a natural method of contraception.]

11. If the man wishes that the woman should conceive then he should go through the initial steps until the actual intercourse ensues. Then he should reverse the process (described in verse no. 10) and do the Apanan exercise first followed by the Pranan¹.

Then he should make the following solemn resolve—'Oh woman! I am installing the Reta or semen (sperm) present in my organ in your Reta or vaginal and uterine fluids'. By this method, the woman is able to conceive (11).

[Note—The process of meditatively controlling the flow of semen is reversed here when the male wants that the woman should conceive. Earlier the Pranan was done first, not the Apanan is done first.

The entire process can be explained in simple terms as follows. The male organ (the phallus) is compared to the nose—the tip is the outer opening of the nostril through which the vital life-infusing wind called Pran is inhaled, while the same opening is compared to the anus through which the Apan wind, the wind which

passes down the intestines and helps to eliminate waste from the body, passes because the exhaled wind also helps to eliminate toxic gases from the body.

Now, if the male wishes to affect contraception then he would 'suck' in the vital fluids from the female organ much like a syringe sucks out blood from the body of a patient. This is the Pranana procedure of verse no. 10. The withdrawn fluid of the female is then spitted out through the Apanana procedure much like exhaled wind is thrown out of the body.

When the male wishes that the female conceives as described in verse no. 11, the process is reversed. First he does the Apanana exercise whereby the contents of his male organ, i.e. the semen already filling it, is ejaculated out, or literally 'exhaled' like the Apana wind through the opening of his male organ. This semen is transplanted into the female organ and then the male does the Pranana procedure, because the female tube which is now already choked by the inflow of the incoming semen is safe enough to prevent the female fluids from being sucked out by the male organ any longer.

There is another way of looking at it. The Apana wind is the flatus passing down the lower intestines. In order to pass flatus, the muscles of the pelvic region are contracted and sufficient pressure generated. So, at the time of climax, the husband uses all the powers of the muscles of his lower abdomen and pelvic region to force the semen into the female genitalia. Once done with, he relaxes and deeply inhales fresh air through his nostrils which had been tightly shut earlier to help build sufficient pressure needed for ejaculation. Thus, Apana precedes Pran in this procedure.]

12. If one believes that his wife is disloyal to him and he wishes to punish the other person (the adulterer), then he should adopt the following procedure:--

The sacred fire should be consecrated and established in a pot of half-baked earth (mud). Then a reverse order should be followed to offer oblations (of clarified butter etc.) to this fire. Peacock feather with a long pointed stalk resembling sharp arrows having fins should be placed or spread in the unconventional direction—i.e. the south-east corner called the 'Agni-kona' instead of the sanctified direction which is north-east called the 'Ishan-kona'. These feathers should be placed such that their reverse side is facing up and the pointed side of the tip is towards the sacred fire.

Next, these feathers should be dipped in the clarified butter or Ghee and four oblations should be made to the fire. With each offering, one Mantra should be contemptuously and disdainfully said as follows—(a) 'Mum Samidhehaushihha Pranapana Ta Adade', meaning 'Ah! My wife resembles a robust, youthful, splendid and blazing fire, and you (i.e. the adulterer) have offered your oblations (semen/sperm). You have defiled my fire sacrifice. Hence, I sincerely curse you, and woe to you! I hereby confiscate and appropriate your vital winds called Pran and Apana, making you impotent and inept'.

After saying this Mantra, clarified butter should be offered to the fire using the reversed feathers of the peacock (instead of the usual wooden ladle) while saying the word 'Phat' meaning 'explode and tear apart'. When the offering is complete, the following Mantra should be said—'Asau Mum Shatru', meaning 'This is my enemy' followed by the name of the adulterer.

(b) Similarly, the following Mantra should be said while offering the second oblations to the fire—'Mum Samidhehaushihha Putrapashuntasta Adade', meaning 'Ah! My wife resembles a robust, youthful, splendid and blazing fire, and you (i.e. the adulterer) have offered your oblations (semen/sperm). You have defiled my fire sacrifice. Hence, I sincerely curse you, and woe to you! I vehemently curse you that you'll lose your sons and livestock'.

Once again, after saying this Mantra, clarified butter should be offered to the fire using the reversed feathers of the peacock (instead of the usual wooden ladle) while saying the word 'Phat' meaning 'explode and tear apart'. When the offering is complete, the following Mantra should be said—'Asau Mum Shatru', meaning 'This is my enemy' followed by the name of the adulterer.

(c) The third oblation follows the same pattern but the Mantra is the following—'Mum Samidheahaushi-rishtasukriti Ta Adade', meaning 'Ah! My wife resembles a robust, youthful, splendid and blazing fire, and you (i.e. the adulterer) have offered your oblations (semen/sperm). You have defiled my fire sacrifice. Hence, I sincerely curse you, and woe to you! I vehemently curse you that all your righteous deeds and the good effects of any fire sacrifices that you have done would become null and void, they would not bear fruits for you'.

Once again, after saying this Mantra, clarified butter should be offered to the fire using the reversed feathers of the peacock (instead of the usual wooden ladle) while saying the word 'Phat' meaning 'explode and tear apart'. When the offering is complete, the following Mantra should be said—'Asau Mum Shatru', meaning 'This is my enemy' followed by the name of the adulterer.

(d) Finally, the fourth oblation is offered to the sacred fire with the following Mantra—'Mum Samidheahashaparakasho Ta Adade', meaning 'Ah! My wife resembles a robust, youthful, splendid and blazing fire, and you (i.e. the adulterer) have offered your oblations (semen/sperm). You have defiled my fire sacrifice. Hence, I sincerely curse you, and woe to you! I vehemently curse you that all your hopes, expectations, aspirations, wishes, promises, vows, determinations and resolves will be in vain and become fruitless; they would be unfulfilled and you would be ever un-contented'.

Once again, after saying this Mantra, clarified butter should be offered to the fire using the reversed feathers of the peacock (instead of the usual wooden ladle) while saying the word 'Phat' meaning 'explode and tear apart'. When the offering is complete, the following Mantra should be said—'Asau Mum Shatru', meaning 'This is my enemy' followed by the name of the adulterer.

When a learned and wise Brahmin who himself is pure and righteous, is a stickler for righteousness and auspiciousness, and who understands the astounding import of this religiously sanctified process of procreation (i.e. who realises that this process is a divine fire sacrifice instead of a mere satisfaction of carnal passions) curses another person, then the adulterer loses all his vitality and stamina, all his energy and glory; he is condemned to ignominy and dies an ignominious death.

Hence, one should never cast a licentious eye upon the chaste and loyal wife of a righteous and noble person (12).

13. When a woman is menstruating, she should not eat from a pot made of bronze for the first three days. On the fourth day, she should take a purifying bath and wear a clean cloth that is not torn from any place. This woman should not be touched by any unrighteous man or woman. After three nights have passed, she can engage herself in any work requiring effort and labour (i.e. any physical work such as thrashing of grain etc.) (13).

14. Those couples who wish that they should have a fair complexioned son who studies at least one of the Vedas (i.e. is basically educated if not fully learned in the scriptures) and lives long for a hundred years should eat a sweet pudding made of rice

and milk stirred with Ghee (clarified butter). This enables them to be blessed with such sons (14).

15. Those couples who wish that they should have a yellow complexioned son who studies at least two of the Vedas (i.e. is better educated than the primary level if not fully learned in the scriptures) and lives long for a hundred years should eat a sweet pudding made of cooked rice and curd (instead of milk) mixed with Ghee (clarified butter). This enables them to be blessed with sons having the desired virtues (15).

16. Those couples who wish that they should have a dark complexioned son who studies at least three of the Vedas (i.e. is a graduate and better educated than the secondary level if not fully learned in the scriptures) and lives long for a hundred years should eat plain rice cooked in water and mixed with Ghee (clarified butter). This enables them to be blessed with sons having the required virtues (16).

17. Those couples who wish that they should have a daughter who is learned, intelligent, wise and skilled, and who lives a full fruitful life of hundred years, should eat a gruel made of sesame seeds and rice mixed with Ghee (clarified butter). This enables them to be blessed with a daughter with the expected virtues (17).

18. Those couples who wish that their son becomes a famous and acclaimed scholar, gets honour and respect in the assembly of learned people, is intelligent, expert and wise, becomes a fine orator and a pleasant speaker who would be able to endear even his opponents, is learned in all the Vedas, and lives a fruitful life till a mature hundred years, should eat a gruel made of rice and pulp of a herb called *Uksha* or *Rishabh*¹, liberally doused with Ghee (clarified butter). This enables them to be blessed with a son having the aforementioned virtues (18).

[Note—¹The *Uksha* or *Rishabh* is a medicinal herb found in the Himalayan range of mountains in the north of India. It is said to so powerful that it makes a man as potent as a bull; it is said to improve fertility and manliness, virility and masculinity. It is also known as the legendary Som plant in ancient texts. It is especially lauded as a powerful stimulant in *Susrut Sanhita*, section 1, chapter 38 which mentions thirty seven such powerful and potent herbs. Its roots and leaves resemble garlic, and its cousin called the *Rishabh* plant is shaped like the horns of a bull—hence the name ‘*Rishabh*’, meaning a bull. It is also called *Jivak* or the ‘life-giver’. These herbs enhance virility, masculinity, strength, stamina, vitality, vigour and life giving energy in the form of sperms disguised as a blob of mucous. They are sweet to taste and fragrant, and medically neutralize the bad effects of excessive bile and acidity in the body. They are used as antidotes for cough and rheumatism.]

19. On the fourth day in the morning, the man should cook the rice grains freshly threshed by his wife (as described in verse no. 13 above) in an earthen pot. This is to be mixed with consecrated Ghee (clarified butter), and this mixture is used as a *Manth* to be offered as an offering to the fire sacrifice. [This is a process called ‘*Sthalipak*’, literally meaning that the platter full of rice mixed with Ghee is ready to be used and deemed to have been pre-cooked symbolically in the plate itself.]

Then the fire sacrifice should be performed using this admixture as *Manth*, the mixture used as an offering to the consecrated fire. During this sacrifice, the following Mantras should be said—(a) ‘*Agneya Swaha*’—meaning ‘I offer this oblation to the Fire God’; (b) ‘*Anumateya Swaha*’—meaning ‘I offer this oblation to the supreme Lord for his permission’; and (c) ‘*Devaye Savitre Satyaprasavaye Swaha*’—meaning

‘I offer this oblation to the exalted Sun God. Bless me that I have a righteous issue (progeny).’

Performance of the religious fire sacrifice in the above prescribed manner is the best way to do a fire sacrifice with the purpose of procreation as it is a provider of fulfillment of all desires.

The left over Manth (i.e. the portion remaining after the oblations have been made to the sacred fire as described above) should be scooped up from the earthen pot into another container and more Ghee should be added to it. The husband first eats it and then the remaining portion is offered to the wife as a sanctified food.

After eating it, the couple washes their hands and feet, and sip some water to clean the mouth. The water pot is filled with water and the husband pours that water in three installments on his wife in a ritualistic process called ‘Abhishek’ or anointment. The Mantra pronounced during this process is the following—‘Uttisthato Vishwavasoanyamischa Prapurvaya Sanjayam Patya Saha’, meaning ‘Oh the sustainer and nourisher of the world! This lady desires to have a virtuous, righteous, noble and worthy son. Bless her cheerfully and willingly so that she can make a happy union with her husband and achieve her desires’ (19).

20. After that, the husband should feed his wife the rice meal that has been prepared previously in accordance with the type of offspring the couple wishes to have (as described in verse no. 14-16 above). At the time of going to bed at night, the husband should tightly clasp the wife and say the following Mantra—‘Amoahamasmi Sa Twantsa Twamasyamoham Samahamasmi Rik Twam Duyoroham Prithivi Twam Twawehi Sant Rabhava hai Sa Reto Dadhava hai Putsanse Putraye Vitty’—meaning ‘Oh goddess! I am like Pran (vital life infusing wind called breath) while you are like Vak (faculty of speech); you are Vak while I am Pran; I am like the Sam (the inherent melody present in the sacred chants of the Vedas, especially the Sam Veda) while you are like the Rik (the sacred hymns of the Rig Veda); I am like the Duloka (the sky) while you are like the Prithivi (earth). Hence, come; let us embrace each other to form a couple. Let us together bear the divine energy of creation and its astounding potentials represented by my sperms (semen) so that we can be rewarded with a special son who would be special amongst men’ (20).

[Note—It would be noted that the husband cites perfect natural couples such as the faculty of speech called Vak and the breath known as Pran because without Pran no one would be able to speak; the hymns and their inherent melody because the hymns are chanted in a melodious rhythm; and the sky and the earth because the sky completely surrounds the earth but would lose its value if the earth did not harbour any life.]

21. After that, the man should separate the two legs of the lady. At that time, he should say this Mantra—‘Vijihittham Dyavaprithivi Iti’, meaning ‘Oh the twin thighs representing the twin worlds, the earth and the sky. Separate yourselves’.

Then the man should insert his male phallus in the female genitals, close his mouth on hers, and then softly slide his fingers on her body (i.e. move them as if to caress her) three times from her head to her legs. While this is being done, the Mantra said is the following—‘Vishnuryoni Kalpayatum Twashta Rupaani Pitanshatu; Asainchatu Prajapatirthata Garbham Dadhatu Te; Garbham Dhehi Siniwali Garbham Dehi Prithustuke; Garbham Te Ashwini Devavadhttam Pushakar-strajo’. The meaning of this full Mantra is the following—‘Oh beloved! Let the all-pervading and omnipresent Lord Vishnu (the sustainer) empower your womb so that you can bear an excellent son. Let Lord Sun provide his glory, majesty, energy, radiance and

splendour to you and your upcoming offspring. Let Lord Prajapati (the care taker of the creation and the cosmic creator; Brahma) establish himself in me and help me in establishing the sperm in you. Let Lord Dhata (another name of the sustainer and preserver of creation; a term used to jointly address the Trinity Gods, Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder) establish the embryo in you. Oh Goddess! You are a personification of Siniwali (the patron Goddess representing the moon one day prior to the dark moon night), the Goddess who is greatly lauded; hence conceive, conceive! [The word ‘Sinni’ means something that is sweet; hence this address also means ‘oh the sweet one’.] Let Lord Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God and the medicine men of the Gods) wear a lotus garland symbolising the rays of the sun and establish themselves in me to empower me to make you conceive with my sperms’ (21).

[Note—The husband invokes the blessings of all the great Gods of creation who are charged with the creation, sustenance and preservation as well as conclusion of creation, and visualises that their magnificent and stupendous virtues, glories, potentials, energy and vitality and all other such divine qualities and characteristics are installed in the embryo. That is why he propitiates them all. Since the Ashwini Kumars are medicine men, their blessings are essential to ensure that the conception is done and brought to fruition without any medical problems.]

22. In some ancient time, the Ashwini Kumars had used two self-illuminated ‘Arinis’¹ to rub them with each other vigorously to create the first fire of the cosmic womb which harboured the golden embryo. I am symbolically installing that same embryo in you (as I have invoked the Ashwini Kumars to empower me to do so—refer verse no. 21 above). You should nourish it in your womb and produce the reward in the tenth month. Just like the fire is borne by the earth in its bowls, the heavens bear Indra (the God’s king), and the various directions bear the air or wind, you too should bear this embryo representing a son that I am installing in your womb (22).

[Note—¹*Arinis* are wooden drills used to kindle the sacred fire of the sacrificial pit by vigorously rubbing them with one another; usually they were made of inflammable material]

23. At the time of birth of the infant, the husband should sprinkle consecrated water on her (wife) and say the following Mantra—‘Yathaa Vayuha Pushkarininta Samingyati Sarwataha; Ewa Te Garbha Ejetu Sahavaitu Jarauna. Indrasyayam Vajraha Kritaha Sargalaha Saparisrayaha; Tamindra Nirjahi Garbhena Sawarant Saheti’. The meaning of this long Mantra is as follows—‘Just like the wind makes the surface of a calm pond or lake restless and active, creating ripples and small waves that are mobile, your developed foetus should also become mobile in your womb, and inspired by the Wind God it should acquire sufficient momentum to come out of it along with the placenta and its encasing membrane. This path is the designated path by which Indra moves¹. So oh Indra! Enter this path and come out with the embryo and its membranes’ (23).

[Note—¹The king of Gods, Indra, has the Wind God as his companion. They move together. It is on the behest of Indra that the Wind God moves the rain bearing clouds across the sky to pour rain upon the earth. The symbolism is very remarkable here—the rain is the harbinger of life on earth; the male semen is like this rain which has seeded life in the womb of the female like the rain seeding earth with life. This completes the cycle of creation described in Canto 6, Brahmin 2, verse no. 9-16; Canto 5, Brahmin 10, verse no. 1; Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 36; and Canto 4, Brahmin 4, verse no. 1-25. In this verse, the Aapaan wind force present in the womb

activates the muscles of the uterus. These start moving in waves like the ripples on the surface of water of a lake or pond, and push the embryo out.]

24. [Now the formal ceremonies and rituals performed upon the birth of a child are being described.]

Upon the birth of a child, it should be picked up in the lap. A sacred fire is lit. For making offerings to it, a viscous fluid consisting of Ghee (clarified butter) and curd is kept in a bronze vessel. This mixture is used to make three oblations to the sacred fire while the child lies in the lap.

The Mantra said while making the first offering is the following—‘Aamin Sahastram Pushyasamedhamaanha Swe Girhe; Asyopasandya Ma Chaitsit Prajaya Cha Pashubhscha Swaha’. The meaning of this Mantra is as follows—‘I am blessed with a priceless asset and a matchless fortune in the form of a son. Let me be a sustainer and a provider of refuge and shelter for thousands of unfortunate people. [That is, let me become prosperous enough so that I can take care of a large family that would eventually assemble in this household when this son grows up.] In a similar way, let there be no dearth of offsprings, wealth and livestock in the household of this son in future’. With this Mantra, the offering of the mixture should be put in the fire with the word ‘Swaha’, meaning ‘I am offering this oblation to you (the sacred Fire God) for this purpose’.

The Mantra said while making the second offering is the following—‘Mayi Pranatant Stwayi Manasa Juhomi Swaha’. The meaning of this Mantra is as follows—‘I am establishing or symbolically transferring my Pran representing my vitality, vigour, strength, stamina, potency, energy, glory, virtues and characters, my life forces and virtues in you (i.e. in the son)’. Saying this, the mixture is offered to the sacred fire with the word ‘Swaha’, meaning ‘I am offering this oblation to you (the sacred Fire God) for this purpose’.

The Mantra said while making the third offering is the following—‘Yat Karmana Tyariricham Uad Va Nunmihaakaram; Agnishtastwishtakrid Vidwaan Swishtantant Suhutum Karotu Naha Swaheti’. The meaning of this Mantra is as follows—‘Whatever inadvertent transgressions, errors and follies that I might have made, let the Fire God excuse me for them and overlook them. Let him convert them instead into auspicious, noble and righteous deeds and actions (so that instead of being punished for them I and my image, the son, may be absolved of their consequences)’. Saying this, the remaining part of the consecrated mixture is offered to the sacred fire with the word ‘Swaha’, meaning ‘I am offering this oblation to you (the sacred Fire God) for this purpose’ (24).

25. After performing the auspicious initiating ceremony, the father should take his mouth close to the ear of the newly born child and utter the words ‘Vak’ three times. [The word Vak means ‘the faculty of speech’ or ‘to speak’. The process symbolises that the father blesses the child that the three primary Vedas, i.e. the Rig, Sam and Yajur, should be made accessible to him, and consequentially he should be able to acquire the best of knowledge, erudition, wisdom, sagacity and enlightenment epitomized by these scriptures.]

As the next step, pure curd, honey and clarified butter should be stirred into a homogenous paste and scooped up in a golden spoon. This concoction should be picked up on the tip of the finger and the infant should be made to lick it. During the licking procedure, the following four Mantras are to be said—(a) ‘Bhuste Dadhami’, meaning ‘I am symbolically establishing your glory and fame in this terrestrial

world'. Or 'I am anointing you to have majesty over this world'; (b) 'Bhuvaste Dadhami', meaning 'I am symbolically establishing your glory and fame in this celestial world'. Or 'I am anointing you to have majesty over this world'; (c) 'Swaste Dadhami', meaning 'I am symbolically establishing your glory and fame in this heavenly world'. Or 'I am anointing you to have majesty over this world'; and (d) 'Bhu-Bhurvaha-Sarwaha Twayi Dadhami', meaning 'I am symbolically establishing your glory and fame in the three worlds consisting of the terrestrial world, the celestial world, and the heavens'. Or 'I am anointing you to have majesty over all these three worlds' (25).

[Note—The father is not now an ordinary man but the creator Brahma personified. It must be noted that only a person who is learned in the scriptures and gives them credence would even care to go through this elaborate ritual. And a wise and well-read man in the scriptures is expected to know and understand the import of the entire philosophy behind the procreation process, thereby establishing his own position as the creator Brahma who was the first father who had done the fire sacrifice to initiate the process of creation—refer Canto 1, Brahmin 1-6 of this Upanishad. The rest of the people would start celebrating the arrival of the son in a carnival like spirit with no time for such ceremonies. In today's world, children are born in maternity wards of hospitals and the parents are busy filling forms instead of such rituals which a modern man regards as ridiculous. Perhaps this is the reason why the son turns out to be so wayward and a cause of constant worry and nuisance for both the parents as well as the society when he grows up.]

26. Then the child should be assigned a name. The father should tell him, 'You are Veda'. This word Veda is the child's name by default; it is the child's untold and undeclared name (26).

[Note—Read in the context of verse no. 25, this verse assumes a great significance. The father hopes that his son would grow up to be a learned man well versed in the Vedas and would be honoured by this title because it would indicate that he is a personification of wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment as well as an embodiment of all possible knowledge that exist in this world and is enshrined in the Vedas. His fame and good name would naturally spread and get established in all the directions of the world as a well-read wise man. This is how his Lordship would be firmly rooted in the three worlds represented by the words Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha as mentioned in verse no. 25 above. See also verse no. 27 below.]

27. Then the father should return the child to the wife (i.e. the child's mother) and ask her to breast feed it. At that time, the following Mantra is to be said—'Yaste Stanaha Shashayo Yo Mayomuryo Ratnadha Vasuvid Yaha Sudatraha. Yen Vishawa Pushayasi Varanayani Saraswati Tamahi Dhatwe Karaiti'. The meaning of this Mantra is as follows—'Oh Goddess Saraswati (the patron Goddess of learning, wisdom and speech)! Let your breasts become a treasury (receptacle) of an endless flow of milk which is a wholesome provider of nourishment to all the creatures in this creation. It is like a mine of all gems; it is magnanimous bestower of all worldly as well as heavenly assets; and it is through it (milk of knowledge) that you bless everyone with all possible noble, auspicious and righteous virtues and qualities that are worth acquiring and possessing. Oh Goddess! Subtly enter the body of my wife and put your breast into this child's mouth to enable it to suck the nectar of life that would sustain and protect it' (27).

[Note—The Goddess Saraswati who is the patron Goddess of knowledge and erudition is invoked by the father once the child is born and ready to imbibe food and drink. This symbolises the eagerness of the father that his son should become wise

and learned. One very pertinent point to note here is that a wise father is not invoking the Goddess of wealth known as Laxmi to feed the child and nourish it. This is because a wise father realises that if the child has knowledge, wisdom, erudition, intelligence, skills, expertise and sagacity, virtues whose patron Goddess is Saraswati and not Laxmi, then money and material well being would automatically follow suit. Worldly assets are all perishable but truthful knowledge learned by studying the Vedas would make his son immortal in the sense that his name and fame would not only spread far and wide but also become immortal.]

28. The child's mother is finally blessed by the following Mantra—'Ilasi Maitravaruni Vire Virmijjanat; Sa Twam Virvati Bhav Yasman Virvatoakaraditi; Tam Va Atamahuratipita Batabhuratipitamaho Bataabhaha Pramam Bat Kashtaam Prapachhriya Yashasa Brahmavarchasen Ya Avamvido Brahmnasaya Putra Jayat Iti'. The meaning of this long Mantra is as follows—'Oh Goddess! You are a personification of the honourable and praise worthy Maitra-varuni (another name of Arundhati, the wife of sage of Vashistha, the moral preceptor of Lord Ram and the son of the creator Brahma). Oh the brave one! By giving birth to a brave son, you have given me the honour of becoming the father of a brave son. Hence, I bless you that you too be known as the mother of a brave son. [That is, let us be equally proud of being the parents of a brave son.] Let the people say that this child is better and superior to his father and grandfather. Let him attain the pinnacle of glory, success, achievements, progress and development in his life in this world. Let him acquire and be possessed of the best of 'Laxmi' (a metaphor for worldly riches and material well being), the best of 'Yash' (fame, good name, majesty, authority and renown), and the best of 'Brahm Tej' (divine glory, spiritual magnificence, splendourous energy and excellent vitality and other virtues, values and qualities associated with a person who is Brahm-realised; let him shine in every field that is auspicious and righteous much like the radiance and splendour of Brahm who is the supreme transcendental Being)'.
A Brahmin (i.e. a learned and wise man) in whose household such a son is born also becomes worthy of admiration, honour and praise (28).

Canto 6, Brahmin 5

[This Brahmin lists the long chain of seers and sages who were exponents of this Branch of the Shukla Yajur Veda. Since the last Brahmin of this Upanishad glorifies motherhood and lays emphasis on the importance and divinity of the 'mother' who brings forth new life into this world, and without whom none of the great sages and seers would have been here, they were known after the name of their respective mothers and not their fathers as is the custom today. It must be noted here that the father in all the cases is symbolically the same universal father known as Prajapati Brahma, the creator, who had personified himself as the individual father of the respective sage or seer. It is not that the father is of any less importance than the mother, but the latter has been raised to a high pedestal to salute her exemplary contribution in the process of creation because it is she, as an incarnation of the sacred fire of the fire sacrifice that the entire exercise of procreation has been visualised to be, who undertakes to accept the offering made into this sacrificial ritual and then blesses the performer of the sacrifice, who in this particular case is the father, with the

reward or fruit of a son. She has to undergo severe sufferings in the process, but bears all with astounding fortitude and resilience.

Again, since each verse is deemed to be a holy edict of the Vedas and not merely an ordinary literary composition, and the Vedas have directly descended from Brahma at the time of creation, each individual section of this Upanishad is named a 'Brahmin', or a set of edicts that are direct descendants of Brahma's own wisdom. The word 'Brahmin' also implies that these chapters are sanctified, divine, holy and pure, and they have the greatest of wisdom and erudition enshrined in them.

Another pertinent point is that the list starts at the bottom and progresses upwards till it reaches the apex point from where this Vedic knowledge had first originated—and this first divine Being who first propounded, enunciated, elucidated and proclaimed the divine and eclectic knowledge contained in this Canto was none other than Brahma, the creator.]

1. This knowledge was taught to the son of Pautimashi by the son of Katyayani; the son of Katyayani came to learn about it from the son of Gautami; the son of Gautami from the son of Bhaaradwaji; the son of Bhaaradwaji from the son of Parashari; the son of Parashari from the son of Oupaswaswati; the son of Oupaswaswati from the son of Parashari; the son of Parashari from the son of Katyayani; the son of Katyayani from the son of Kaushaki; the son of Kaushaki from the son of Alambi and the son of Vaiyaghrapadi; the son of Vaiyaghrapadi from the son of Kaanvi and the son of Kaapi. (1).

2. The son of Kaapi received this knowledge from the son of Aatreya; the son of Aatreya from the son of Gautami; the son of Gautami from the son of Bhaaradwaji; the son of Bhaaradwaji from the son of Parashari; the son of Parashari from the son of Vaatsi; the son of Vaatsi from the son of Parashari; the son of Parashari from the son of Varkaruni; the son of Varkaruni from the son of Artabhagi; the son of Artabhagi from the son of Shaungi; the son of Shaungi from the son of Sankriti; the son of Sankriti from the son of Alambayani; the son of Alambayani from the son of Alambi; the son of Alambi from the son of Jayanti; the son of Jayanti from the son of Mandukayani; the son of Mandukayani from the son of Manduki; the son of Manduki from the son of Shandili; the son of Shandili from the son of Rathitari; the son of Rathitari from the son of Bhaluki; the son of Bhaluki from the two sons of Kraunchaki; the two sons of Kraunchaki from the son of Vaidbhriti; the son of Vaidbhriti from the son of Karshkeyi; the son of Karshkeyi from the son of Prachin Yogi; the son of Prachin Yogi from the son of Sanjivi; the son of Sanjivi* from the son of Aasurvasi Prashni; the son of Aasurvasi Prashni from Aasurayan; Aasurayan from Aasuri (2).

[Note—It is to be noted that the last two sages, i.e. Aasurayan and Aasuri, have been named directly and not with a prefix of their mothers name. From here onwards, all the sages and seers are directly named. This shows that after the time when Aasurayan was a famous teacher or preacher, the practice of appending the name of the mother was discontinued and the teacher or preacher was recognised on the strength of his own erudition and knowledge. This might have happened due to many reasons, one being that some of the ladies might have resented their names being drawn into the public domain; they wished that their son stand on his own two legs and be recognised for his own independent scholarship, learning, erudition and wisdom rather than on the basis of whose son he was, the lineage to which he belonged. Then it also might have happened that certain mothers didn't wish that their past lives, which might not have been sufficiently righteous, too upright and

conducive to the high office and stature that their great spiritual son occupied, to impinge upon the bright prospects of their illustrious sons. A typical example was sage Satyakam Jabal whose mother did not know who his father was—refer Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 4, Section 4, verse no. 2 which is very explicit on this point.

See note to verse no. 4 below also.]

3. Aasuri learnt this knowledge from Yagyavalkya; Yagyavalkya from Uddalak; Uddalak from Arun; Arun from Upveshi; Upveshi from Kushri; Kushri from Vaajsrawa; Vaajsrawa from Jivhavan Badhyog; Jivhavan Badhyog from Asit Varshgan; Asit Varshgan from Harit Kashyap; Harit Kashyap from Shilp Kashyap; Shilp Kashyap from Naidhurvi Kashyap; Naidhurvi Kashyap from Vak; Vak from Ambhini; Ambhini from Aditya (the Sun God).

It was the divine verses taught by the Sun God to sage Vajsaneya Yagyavalkya that came to be known as Shukla Yajur Veda. They were proclaimed for posterity by this sage on this earth (3).

[Note—Sage Yagyavalkya was taught by the Sun God in the disguise of a horse. Hence the word ‘Vajsanaye’ was added to the name of Yagyavalkya as a title of honour much like we have a Ph.D or a D.Phil. today.]

4. Till the son of Sanjivi (see verse no. 2, the fourth name from the end marked by an asterisk *), the line of sages is one¹. After that it branches out or bifurcates into different line of sages and seers.

Therefore, the son of Sanjivi learnt this knowledge from Mandukayani²; Mandakayani from Mandavya; Mandavya from Kautsa; Kautsa from Maahitthi; Maahitti from Vamakshayan; Vamakshayan from Shandilya; Shandilya from Vatsya; Vatsya from Kusri; Kusri from Yagyavacha Rajastambayan; Yagyavacha Rajastambayan from Tur Kavasheya; Tur Kavasheya from Prajapati (Brahma); and Prajapati (Brahma) from the supreme transcendental being known as Brahm.

The supreme transcendental being known as Brahm is self-produced, self-manifested or self-illuminated. We most reverentially and devotedly bow before this Brahm (4).

[Note—(a) *It would be noted that the name of the mother as a prefix to the name of the son had been in vogue till the time of Sanjivi. Then onwards, this practice was discontinued. There might have been many reasons for this to happen. One of the plausible reasons is that as the sages and seers went to far off places to establish their own hermitages to spread the divine word of the Gospel of Brahm, they preferred to remain anonymous; they did not wish to have any tag attached to them. They decided to break free from their early life and take to the life of a wandering friar or a monk who changes his name to hide his original line of birth because his new life as a wandering friar is like a new birth for them. They thus decided to virtually break the metaphoric ‘placenta’ of their earlier life by de-linking their name from the name of their mothers to signal that they have completely uprooted themselves from their pasts and have assumed a new life, absolutely free from its encumbrances of having any vestiges of past still clinging to them as true apostles of the Supreme Being.

¹Earlier, verse no. 2 states that this sage named the son of Sanjivi has got this knowledge from the son of Aasurivasi Prashni, but now this verse says that he got it from Mandukayani. This is perhaps because the same man had two teachers who taught him before he migrated to some distant land. The first teacher, i.e. the son of Aasurivasi Prashni was of the old school of spiritual belief that prevented the spiritual teacher from moving out to distant places thinking that it was non-conducive to their spiritual life, who never ventured out of their cloistered life in a hermitage to move out to distant lands to spread the divine word of the Gospel of Brahm for fear of

violating traditions and getting polluted in the corrupt environs outside their hermitages. It appears that the son of Sanjivi realised the folly and decided that the good word of the Lord needs be spread to the world. So he moved out and the first wise teacher outside from whom he learned the same knowledge was a man named Mandukayani.

A close look at verse no. 2 would reveal that besides this son of Sanjivi, another sage, the son of Aasurivasi Prashni had also moved out and broken the tradition of sticking to the same geographical area or a particular school of spiritual thinking that laid stress on bearing the name of the mother, for he had been taught by sage Aasurayan who did not append the name of his mother to his own name.

(b) Another point to note here is that more often than not the names of the sages and seers have been repeated. This is obviously because these sages/seers used to learn from one another; no one individual claimed to be such an expert in the knowledge of Brahm that he need not learn anything more on the subject. They had no false ego leading to a sense of false vanity, hypocrisy and haughtiness. If one sage/seer was learned in one branch, he would approach the other one to teach him what he knew, and vice versa.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—3

JABAL UPANISHAD

Belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, this Upanishad has 6 short sections. Section 1 is a dialogue between sage Yagyavalkya, the chief exponent of Shukla Yajur Veda, and Brihaspati (Jupiter), the moral preceptor of Gods. Yagyavalkya has proclaimed that the place where Pran (the life-giving vital force and energy of creation) and Brahm (the supreme, transcendental Being) reside, and where ritualistic sacrificial worship of Gods is done, is known as the 'Avimukta Khsetra', and it is represented by the terrestrial holy city of Kurushetra on the worldly plane, and the Brahm-randhra located on the top of the head from the metaphysical and yoga point of view. It is here that Lord Shiva pronounces the 'Tarak Mantra', the holy words having the potential of providing emancipation and salvation to a dying man.

Section 2 is a conversation between sage Yagyavalkya and sage Atri. Here, this 'Avimukta Kshetra (area) is described as being located between the eyebrows. This is the site of the 3rd of wisdom.

These two sections, nos. 2 and 3, are almost exactly like Tarak Upanishad which is chapter no. 16 of this volume.

The word 'Abhimukta' literally means 'that which or who is not liberated'. Here it refers to that holy place which has the mystical divine powers and authority to provide this liberation to the soul of the creature, free it from the shackle that has tied it down to this body and the world, and help in its deliverance. In short, it describes the soul's emancipation and salvation with a metaphysical perspective.

In section 3, sage Yagyavalkya avers that Japa (constant repetition) of the 100 divine names of Rudra (a form of Shiva), called 'Shat-Rudra', has the potential of

empowering the devotee aspirant/spiritual seeker to obtain a symbolic victory over death.

Sections 4--6 are focused on 'Sanyas'—the way of life of total worldly renunciation. In section 4, Yagyavalkya describes to the learned king Janak the sanctified process of taking the vows of Sanyas and following the rigorous life as a Sanyasi. In section 5, he describes to sage Atri other details pertaining to this way of life, such as the initiation by the sacred thread, the clothes to be worn, the tonsuring of the head, survival by begging for food etc.

In section 6, the characters and life of some selected Sanyasis (i.e. those who follow the life of Sanyas) is discussed.

The concept of 'Avimukta Kshetra' and the 'Tarak Mantra' has also been described in brief in Tarak Upanishad which is chapter 16 of this anthology, and in great detail in Mukti Upanishad which is chapter 19.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath

Section—1

1. Lord Brihaspati (the moral preceptor of Gods) asked sage Yagyavalkya, 'Which is the site of the Pran (the vital life infusing force and energy in a living creature)? What is the purpose and meaning of worshipping the Gods and offering sacrifices to them by the various sense organs of the body? And where is the residence of the supreme Brahm in the living creature?'

Sage Yagyavalkya replied, 'Avimukta is the symbolic area where the Pran lives, where its domain lies. It is here that the sense organs do their symbolic worshipping and offering of sacrifices to the Gods. And it is also the place where the supreme Brahm lives for all the living creatures. One should remember this wherever one goes. The place called Avimukta is located in the terrestrial holy site called Kurushetra. The gross body and its physical gross organs worship and offer sacrifices to the Gods, and it is here that the supreme Brahm symbolically and subtly resides as far as the worldly creatures are concerned.

When the Pran representing the vital life of a living being, the vital wind which keeps the creature alive, or the breath, goes out from the body at the time of death, at that time Lord Rudra (one of the chief forms of Lord Shiva and often used as a synonym for him) preaches everyone the holy Mantra of Brahm having divine powers and stupendous potentials to bestow liberation and deliverance to the dying creature. This Mantra is called 'Tarak Brahm' because it enlightens a dying man about that divine entity which can provide the final emancipation and salvation to the soul of the creature. This enables that creature to obtain and partake that elixir of eternity, beatitude and felicity, which is called Amrit, and consequentially, as its reward, obtain final 'Mukti' or liberation and deliverance from this world of transmigration.

Therefore, it is for the creature's own good and welfare that it does not abandon the 'Avimukta' area and keep on faithfully serving it'. This is how sage Yagyavalkya asserted about this fact.[1].

[Note—(1) The word *Avimukta* literally means 'that which is not free; that which is bound or shackled'. Here the word means that place or that

entity that has the potential to set free those who are shackled by providing them with liberation and deliverance from their bondage. It has many connotations such as—(a) The holy pilgrimage site of Kashi or Varanasi, a city of northern India where Lord Shiva is said to reside eternally on this earth and provide this liberation and deliverance to the soul of a dying man by uttering the Tarak Mantra in his ears.

(b) Another site is Kurushetra where the legendary Mahabharat war was fought.

(c) According to Yoga philosophy, this site is located at two places corresponding to the holy sites mentioned above—one is the area around the ears, and the other is the central point between the two eyebrows. This point is also called the ‘Third Eye’, or the point in the head where wisdom, enlightenment, the mystical powers to see what is not visible, to have deep insight etc. are located. And ascetic who is able to activate this area of the mind is empowered with these potentials, which otherwise remain dormant.

(d) The Brahm Randhra, which is the top central point of the head, is also said to be the abode of Brahm. It is the Avimukta area because when the ascetic is able to concentrate his attention on this citadel, he achieves supreme bliss and peace. According to Yoga, when the vital energy of Kundalini is aroused, it snakes up the spine and enters this area, thereby blessing the aspirant with immense bliss to the aspirant. It is said that when an expert ascetic dies, his vital winds, called the Pran, collect in this area, called Brahm Randhra, and then exit from the body through its slit. While doing so, the Atma, the pure conscious soul of the ascetic, also accompanies the Pran to make its exit from the body. At the time of creation, the supreme Brahm had entered the body of the man through this Brahm Randhra.

(2) The *Tarak Mantra* preached by Lord Shiva is that group of esoteric, ethereal and holy words, syllables or phrases that have stupendous, magical and divine powers that can achieve miracles, and one of them is the ability to give liberation and deliverance to even sinful creatures who can never expect to find emancipation themselves. It gives freedom from miseries, fears, torments and other misfortunes that devour a creature. It liberates a creature from the cycle of birth and death, the miseries and fears associated with this world, with old age, death and their accompanying horrors etc. (Atharva-shikhar Upanishad, 2/1; Advaitararak Upanishad, 3; and Tarak Upanishad. The ascetic/Yogi achieves liberation and deliverance by concentrating his internal thoughts at a point between the eyebrows where he realises the supreme, transcendental existence of Brahm, and he mentally one with Brahm after this realisation (Advaitararak-2,3). According to RamTapaniupanishad, the divine emancipation and salvation providing Mantra is ‘OM RANG RAMAYE NAMAHE’. (RamTapaniupanishad, 2/3). Atharva-shikhar Upanishad, 4/4 says that ‘OM’ is that Tarak Mantra].

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Section--2

1. Then sage Atri asked sage Yagyavalkya, ‘How is the eternal, endless, infinite, unformed and un-manifested Atma known?’

Yagyavalkya replied, ‘To learn about it, one should worship and concentrate one’s attention, thoughts and energy on Avimukta because that eternal, measureless, endless, unformed and un-manifested Supreme Being is located at the site called Avimukta; it is established there’.[1].

2. (Atri enquired---) ‘Where is this Avimukta located or established?’

(Sage Yagyavalkya replied---) ‘It is located between Varna and Nasi (the two legendary rivers)’.

(Atri asked---) ‘What are these Varna and Nasi?’.

(Yagyavalkya replied---) ‘That which finds an answer or solution to all the sins committed by an individual’s sense organs, along with their consequences, is called Varna, while that which completely exterminates, gets rid of or helps in annihilating them, is called Nasi’.

When Atri asked about the location of these two, Yagyavalkya replied, ‘The focal point between the two eyebrows and the root of the nose is their symbolic location. This point is also said to be the symbolic boarder or junction point of the Duloka (the sky around the Sun; the near heaven) and the Parloka (the other world where the creature goes after death; the far heaven where Spirits and Gods live).

Those who are expert in the knowledge pertaining to Brahm, worship, honour and adore this point as the symbolic abode of Brahm when they offer their prayers three times a day, called Sandhya. Verily, it is the Avimukta that is worthy of reverence, adoration, worship and paying sincere attention to if one wishes to break free from the fettering shackles of this deluding and entrapping world, and instead obtain emancipation and salvation or Mukti for themselves.

A person, who has obtained enlightenment and self-realisation following this firm conviction, becomes competent enough to preach others about the Atma or soul. [2]

[Note--(1) There are two physical (terrestrial) planes where these pilgrim sites mentioned in this Upanishad are located. One is Varanasi or Kasi, and the other is Kurushetra; these are their geographical locations. The other location—and from the metaphysical and Yoga point of view more important—is their symbolic location inside the body itself. For those who are intellectually evolved and those who believe in the stupendous powers of meditation and contemplation as the paths that can open the doors for their ultimate liberation and deliverance, the latter location is of paramount importance rather than the pilgrim sites located in the external world. The latter sites are meant for those who are lower down in the hierarchy of intellectual development, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment but nevertheless desirous of having a last minute refuge and succour for their tormented souls. The importance and significance of the location internally in the body has been elaborately explained in Sam Veda’s Jabal-darshan Upanishad, section 4, verse no.48-63 amongst other Upanishads dealing with Yoga; this particular Upanishad forms chapter 15 of an anthology of this Upanishad published separately by this humble author.

(2) The *Sandhya* is a religious prayer offered to the supreme Lord three times a day—at dawn, at noon and at sun set. These points of time stand for the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose where the Avimukta area is supposed to be symbolically located in the body—the dawn is the meeting point of the night and the day, the noon of the pre-noon hours and post-noon part of the day, and dusk for the day and the night.]

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Section—3

1. Next, the Brahmachari disciple of sage Yagyavalkya asked him, ‘What is the supreme and best Japa (constant repetition of divine Mantras) that can help one attain Amrit or that principle which provides eternity and bliss?’

Sage Yagyavalkya replied, ‘It is called ‘Shat Rudra Japa’. It helps one to attain the exalted stature where he can taste that elixir (Amrit) which makes him eternal. This means that the seeker is able to vanquish death by becoming imperishable and eternal like that Amrit itself . [1].

[Note—The *Shat-Rudra Japa* pertains to Lord Shiva’s Mantra containing his one hundred names and repeated a hundred times. Since Shiva is the God responsible for death as well as providing emancipation and salvation by preaching the Tarak Mantra (see section 1 of this Upanishad) by uttering it in the ear of a dying man, this Mantra pleases the Lord and helps to invoke his benevolence and mercy upon a dying man, and consequentially the man obtains liberation and deliverance (Mukti). Since the ‘mortal’ creature’s Atma/soul becomes liberated from the fetters that shackle it to this body living in this entrapping and deluding world, it becomes emancipated and regains its primary and eternal form as Pran which is synonymous with the vital wind force of life, and acquires all its virtues and attributes (such as being infinite, measureless, formless, all pervading, all encompassing, mighty and powerful). This is tantamount to accessing and drinking the ambrosia of Gods, called Amrit, which makes them one similar to the Gods, i.e. eternal and imperishable.]

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Section—4

[Sections 4-6 deal with the concept of ‘Sanyas’. A similar discourse between sage Yagyavalkya and the erudite and enlightened king Janak appears in Yagyawalkyo-panishad which is chapter 17 of this book]

1. Once the wise and enlightened king Janak, also known as Videha-Janak, went to sage Yagyavalkya and most politely asked him, ‘Oh Lord! Please enlighten me on ‘Sanyas’ (which is a state of complete worldly renunciation)’. At his earnest request, Yagyavalkya preached him thus- ‘A man should first follow the principles and a rigid life style of a ‘Brahmachari’ (when he lives a disciplined life observing austerity and self restraint under the tutelage of a learned and wise teacher and studies the scriptures, or in other words acquires sufficient knowledge and skills that prepares him to face the world when he finally enters the householder’s life). When that phase of life is successfully completed and fruitfully lived, one should enter the next phase called ‘Grihastha-Ashram’ (which means a householder’s life when he marries, raises a family, creates wealth, establishes himself, and gains fame and a certain reputation). After this phase is over, one should enter the next phase called ‘Vanprastha’ which literally means heading for the forest. (In this phase, he hands over all his worldly responsibilities to his heir and goes on a pilgrimage or moves out of the house to live separately in a forest or some hermitage. This is a midway life between a householder’s and that of complete renunciation when a person wanders as a mendicant or a monk or an ascetic who has completely broken all his links with his family, village, kith and kin and the world at large.)

When this phase has passed (and a man is sufficiently trained and prepared to face the rigors of the last and final phase), he should take to ‘Sanyas’, or a life marked by complete and final renunciation when a man should prepare himself for death and

concentrate his attention on contemplation and meditation upon the Atma and the supreme, transcendental Brahm.

This is the usual course the life of a person should take; these are the steps sanctioned by the scriptures.

On the other hand, if true and sincere renunciation sprouts in the heart of a wise man early on in life, he need not follow all the earlier phases of life; he can straight away take the vows of Sanyas. Whether he keeps religious fasts and observes sacraments or not, whether he is educated, learned and skilled or not, whether or not he has duly purified and prepared himself in a planned manner by accepting the vows of Sanyas in the front of a sacred fire (as witness) after the death of his wife, no matter what previous condition he was in, whenever his mind and heart become honestly, sincerely and truly detached from and dispassionate towards the alluring attractions offered by this materialistic world, whenever a man becomes disinterested in the sensory pleasures and comforts of this artificial and deluding world, it is sanctioned that he should or can accept the vows of Sanyas at that time.[1].

[Note—This verse clearly removes all formal traditional hurdles that might come in the way of a person who becomes enlightened early in life, such as is the case with great saints, sages, seers and ascetics who do not wish to waste their precious life and their precious moments in passing through the ‘proper channel’ consisting of four phases as laid down in the above verse. This step by step approach is also necessary because such enlightenment is a rarity, an exception rather than a norm. But in all former cases of early wisdom and renunciation, the operating requirement is truthfulness, honesty and sincerity. Dispassion and detachment should sprout voluntarily in the heart and mind, and it shouldn’t be a medium to hide frustration and failures of life. It should not be done under any compulsion of adverse circumstances or moved by emotions and delusions, because in these instances the man will certainly waver sooner or later and would end up being neither here or there. Worst, such imposter might lead to his complete ruin.]

2. At the time of taking to the life of Sanyas, a formal initiation ceremony is held with the sacred fire as a witness. The aspirant should not do the sacrifice called ‘Prajapatya’ which some unwise people do; it is not meant for a Sanyasi. [This is because this particular ritual is done in honour of Prajapati Brahma, the creator and its guardian, who was responsible for symbolically opening the Pandora’s-box that this world is. A Sanyasi is endeavouring to move away from this illusionary world, and therefore there is no reason why he should worship and offer prayers to Prajapati who created this world of so many relationships and uncountable traps.]

Instead of it, he should offer prayers and oblations to the Fire God (because the fire is purifying, and it burns all the impurities that might be sticking to the soul due to any reason whatsoever, thereby bringing out its radiance and divinity to the fore). This is because the ‘fire element’ is Pran (literally the life in the form of vital wind present inside the body; the vitality and consciousness of the otherwise lifeless, gross and inane body)¹. By worshipping, invoking and offering oblations to the Fire God, the Pran thrives; it becomes stronger, robust and more powerful.

After that, one should symbolically offer the three elements as a sacred offering to the sacred fire. The three qualities inherently present in all the creatures in small or great proportions are called Sat, Raj and Tam, and these are those fundamental elements that are offered to the fire here².

When these three elements have been symbolically offered to the sacred fire, the aspirant Sanyasi should invoke the Fire God with the following prayer—‘Oh Fire! This Pran of mine is the general cause of everything in this world, and it is in it that you have your origin. Oh Fire! You are the one who ‘burns’ the Pran moment by moment. [That is, by each passing moment, the life of a creature has burnt that much fuel and has come that much closure to death by that moment.] You are the authority which enables one to access light (of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment) and attain advancement in one’s spiritual endeavours. Bless me that I too progress in the path that leads to light (i.e. I too may reach the pinnacle of self realisation and enlightenment). Pran is the creator of fire; it is in the symbolic womb (container, receptacle and bosom) of Pran that the ‘fire element’ was born³.

Hence, oh Fire God, I request you to enter that Pran from where you have sprung forth (because that would be like your homecoming!)’. Since the Sanyasi is expected to have burnt all his ego and pride, vanquished all his desires and yearnings, therefore it is deemed that all his worldly passions have virtually vanished, and consequentially he has become serene, calm and tranquil. All his earlier restlessness and turbulence have ceased. Therefore, the ‘fire’ has no fear of being blown out if it comes roosting home in the Pran of the Sanyasi where the fire element had originally belonged! With these prayers and firm conviction, the Sanyasi⁴ should make oblation to the sacred fire by saying the word ‘Swaha’. [This word is uttered at the time of offering oblations to the Gods during formal fire sacrifice rituals.] [2].

[Note---¹*Fire* is a metaphor for energy, vitality, vigour, life, heat, stamina and strength. Breath is a form of Pran, and this is proved by the fact that (a) breath or expiration consists of warm air and (b) a man dies as soon as he stops breathing. Besides this, other forms of Pran or signs of life and senses in the body would freeze to death or become numb if there was no subtle and latent heat inside the body.

²The *Sanyasi* burns his ego and individuality when he takes to the path of Sanyas. These three qualities determine the individuality and personality of a man. When he gets rid of them, though symbolically, he becomes mentally neutral and full of equanimity. He virtually regains the ‘clean slate’ state that he had started out with in his journey of life. This removes all the hurdles in the path of his Atma/soul retrieving its primary pristine pure and uncorrupt form. Since the Atma is a microcosm of the all-pervading and almighty macrocosmic Soul of the cosmos called Brahm, the truly realised Sanyasi is deemed to be a living manifestation or an embodiment of Brahm as long as his Atma or soul lives in his body kept alive by the energy of the Pran. And upon death, emancipation and salvation is his! The three basic qualities inherent in a man which are being referred to here are—Sata, Raja and Tama .

The proportion of the three *Gunas* or qualities decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclinations of the creature. For example, a person with a greater proportion of Satwic or Sata (noble and virtuous) characteristics will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of either Raj or Tam qualities. So, we can say that sage, seers, ascetics, prophets, scholars are generally enlightened persons with a predominant high degree of Satwic quality. Kings and householders who live a good and noble life are examples of those with a predominance of Raja qualities alongside a good sprinkling of Sat qualities as compared to kings who are cruel and unjust, for in their case the lowest and meanest quality called Tama is more active and dominant factor than the other two. Sinners, such as killers, drunks, rowdy

elements, cheats and other evil persons in the society are those with high concentration of Tama quality in them.

³This is because *Pran* is a synonym of the life sustaining vital air element, especially the wind that blows—as is evident by the constant flow of breath inside the body of a living being. Air and the oxygen present in it is a basic necessity for any fire to be kindled and kept alive. Hence metaphorically, the *Pran* is a receptacle that harbours ‘fire’; it activates it, sustains it and is also the cause of its extinction as is clear when the strong wind blows out the fiercest of fire.

The best proof of the inherent presence of fire in the wind/air element is the fact that exhaled breath is warm rather than being cool. We often experience ‘hot and scorching’ wind blowing during summers though we do not see any visible flame or other signs of the presence of fire in it. These two examples show that wind/air element has the fire element inherent to it; the latter is literally hidden in the bosom of the former.

⁴The life of a man is divided into four segments or *Ashrams* — (a) *Brahmacharya* —this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style, (b) *Grihastha* — when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the second phase called *Grihastha Ashram* which is a householder life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life and dealings with this deceptive world with all their accompanying horrifying problems, (c) *Vaanprastha* —this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) *Sanyas* —this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation and begging for food, and single mindedly aiming for emancipation and salvation.]

3. For the purpose of this initiation rite, the sacred fire is to be brought from the house of any righteous household of the village (to which the person belongs). After the Mantras have been said (as described in verse no. 2) and the blessings of the Fire God invoked, the aspirant *Sanyasi* should smell the fire. [This ‘smelling’ is a gesture to indicate that the aspirant’s entire being is soaked, infused and imbued with the divine blessings of the sacred fire; the fire is symbolically inhaled and it takes up residence in the body of the *Sanyasi* to protect him from within.]

In case fire is not available, oblations should be offered to the ‘water’ because the latter embodies all the divine forces of Nature represented by the different Gods; it personifies all the benevolent, magnanimous protecting, sustaining and nourishing virtues that the merciful Gods possess. The aspirant should be firmly convinced that he is offering homage to all the Gods simultaneously when he offers oblations to water. At the end of this initiation ritual, he should pick up the leftover offerings that have

been previously mixed with Ghee (clarified butter) and respectfully eat the whole of it (as sanctified food).

Thus initiated Sanyasi should know that the divine Mantra which would give him final emancipation and provide salvation to his soul has three syllables or letters. [These are A, U and M forming the ethereal and eclectic word 'OM'----]. It is an acronym for the supreme, transcendental Brahm, it is synonymous with Brahm, and it is worthy of being worshipped, honoured, revered and adored like Brahm. This is what Yagyavalkya expounded [3].

[Note---(1) The detailed process of taking to Sanyas and all other matters pertaining to this renunciate way of life have been elaborately described in Sanyaso-panishad of Sam Veda tradition amongst other Upanishads on this subject. (2) The detail process of preparing the offering, called Mantha, to be offered to the sacred fire has been described in Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad 6/3/13, and the relevant Mantras in 6/3/1-12 of the same Upanishad which is chapter 2 of this anthology.]

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Section---5

1. Next, sage Atri asked sage Yagyavalkya, 'I wish to know how a person who does not wear the 'sacred thread' called Yagyopaviti can be ascribed with the honourable title of a Brahmin?' Yagyavalkya replied, 'For him, his Atma, his soul, his pure consciousness, his true 'self', is the symbolic sacred thread. For such wise and enlightened renunciates, it is prescribed that they should purify themselves at the time of any religious rite or observing any sacrament or offering any prayer by using simple water for the purpose. It should be sipped by him three times. For Sanyasis called 'Parivarjak', this is the prescribed method [1].

[Note---This fact has been clearly stated in Sanyaso-panishad, canto 2, verse no. 8,52,119 and 123 of Sam Veda tradition, and Paramhanso-panishad, verse no. 2 of Shukla Yajur Veda. Normally a Brahmin is supposed to wear the sacred thread as a distinguishing holy mark throughout his life as a symbol of his superior status in society as a wise representative of Brahm. This is as long as the world has any relevance for him. After all, the sacred thread consists of a gross perishable material thing originating in earth; it is never as high and exalted, as sublime and imperishable as the Atma having its origin in Brahm. When a person desires sincerely to take to Sanyas, it is natural that he has realised the perishable nature of things of this world and the eternal nature of his Atma. He wishes to find liberation from the fetters that shackle ordinary mortals to this entrapping materialistic world, find deliverance from it, and obtain the ultimate emancipation and salvation by finding the original source of his Atma, the Brahm, and thereby finding complete and final rest there. With this target in mind, all symbols become impediments for him; they are like small stones or pebbles lying on his path which cause annoyance to him by creating unnecessary spiritual hurdles and avoidable formalities which act like a drag and stumbling blocks for him. So he better get rid of them. The answer to the question 'who is a Brahmin' has been elaborately and exhaustibly described in Vajrasuchiko-panishad of the Sam Veda tradition. It has been included as chapter 6 of the anthology of Sam Veda Upanishad of this humble author published separately.]

3. [This verse briefly describes the life of a Sanyasi.] While on his path (i.e. while he is roaming as an itinerant monk or friar), while fasting, while entering a water body (e.g. taking a dip in a river), while entering a fire (i.e. while burning oneself voluntarily as the ultimate sacrificial offering), and while embarking on the final departure as the last leg of his journey in this mortal world (i.e. at the time of death), the following rules are prescribed for a Sanyasi—He should wear ochre/orange coloured over garment (usually a loose cloak or simply a seamless piece of body wrapping sheet), tonsure his head clean, not ask for, expect and accept anything except basic food needed for survival and even that as begged alms, remain mentally and bodily uncorrupt and unpolluted, have no ill-will, animosity, malice and hatred towards anybody, and survive for the overall good and welfare of the society and the people at large by stringently following the vows of Sanyas, especially the vows of begging (which automatically implies that he does not possess any worldly things, has conquered his ego and pride, and has become humble to the core).

If a man is very eager for Sanyas, then he should abandon all forms of attachments and attractions for worldly objects of comfort and pleasure, both by his mind as well as by his speech. [That is, he should neither ever think of them nor speak of them.] This wise path of enlightenment has been proclaimed by the Vedas. This is why it is the most appropriate path for a Sanyasi to follow, because he is deemed to be enlightened about the supreme Truth known as Brahm. This is how sage Yagyavalkya expressed his well considered views on the subject [2].

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Section---6

1. The following great sages did not sport external signs or symbols of Sanyas though they were deemed to be prominent Sanyasis:--Samvartak, Aruni, Shwetketu, Durbasa, Ribhu, Nidagh, Jadbharat, Dattaatreya and Raivtak etc. They were called 'Paramhans' (which literally means those who follow the best path and observe the best principles of Sanyas, thereby becoming superior to their peers and wiser amongst them. They become as pure and wise as the Swan, a bird reputed to possess these eclectic and grand virtues). Their external behaviour was also mysterious (in the sense that they often displayed no behavioral indication of their being a Sanyasi, while internally they were truly renunciates of the highest order. They often appeared overly haughty, arrogant, furious, wild, extravagant and intoxicated with pride and ego of being erudite, learned and wise as well as possessing mystical powers and spiritual strength. But nevertheless they did not have any of these negative traits in them as their basic and inherent nature and temperament. [That is, internally they were at peace with themselves, were complete and true renunciates, were self-realised and enlightened, but more often than not their behaviour belied their exalted state. A typical example is sage Durbasa who has been depicted as being exceedingly arrogant, vehement and wrathful, getting annoyed at the slightest pretext and cursing without reservations, a behaviour unbecoming of a great saint or sage of an exalted stature.] [1]

2. A wise, enlightened, self-realised and exalted Sanyasi should discard all external symbols of Sanyas—such as the trident or the staff, the water-pot, the latticed sling bag, the 'pavitri' which is a brush of grass used to sprinkle water for purification rite, the tuft of hair on the head, and the sacred thread etc. These should be dispersed in the water of a river or any other large water body by saying 'Swaha' (or 'I am offering all

these symbols as offering to water because the latter is an embodiment of all the Gods'; see section 4, verse no.3 also).

Once rid of these symbols, a Sanyasi should focus his attention on his Atma (the pure self, the pure consciousness, the soul, the supreme Brahm in a microcosmic form). He should spend his time meditating upon the Atma, and contemplating upon the ultimate Truth and Reality of this world. (See also Sanyso-panishad, 2/8 in this context.) [2]

[Note—The staff, called a Danda, is an important insignia of a Sanyasi. The 'Tridand' basically means three staffs or sticks tied together, each made up of bamboo. The word 'Danda' stands for self control, and therefore these three staffs stand for a combined control of the mind, called the Mana Dand, control over the speech, called the Vaak Dand, and control over the body, called Kaya Dand.]

3. [This verse describes the characters and virtues of a Sanyasi.] A Sanyasi should follow the code of conduct and ethics consonant with and conducive to a renunciate way of life. He should not have any restlessness, agitations, doubts and confusions in his mind and heart. He should be free from all desires and cravings, and instead be steadily contented. He should not expect anything nor keep anything as a possession with him. He should be a steady pilgrim on the path of Brahm (truth) realisation with a pure and uncorrupt heart and mind. To bear his Pran (life) in his body as long as the appropriate time for its departure does not arrive, he begs for food, though for all practical purposes he is deemed to be liberated from all shackles, included that of the gross body. [That is, though his Atma is freed from the fetters of ignorance that tie down a man to this body which he erroneously treats as his true self, he still eats sufficiently enough to sustain the basic needs of the body because it harbours his Atma, albeit temporarily.] He eats not for taste or pampering his hunger for delectable food, but literally dumps the food in the 'pot' of his belly. [This shows that he keeps his Atma aloof from the temptations of a tasty food.]

He is not worried either about gains or losses, i.e. he treats them equally with equanimity. He stays in a secluded and serene place, a temple or any place of worship, near bushes and alcoves or any other place where there is grass (so that he can lie down on it), near the hole of a snake, an ant hill, the root of a tree (i.e. in its shade), a potter's household, a place where a fire sacrifice is held, and the banks of a clean river, on a mountain or in one of its caves or valleys, in a pit or a natural abyss, near a waterfall or any other place which is deemed to be free from any worldly allurements and temptations, such as any chance of offering any comfort and pleasure to the body and its organs.

He should never think of his earlier home and enjoyments of life, and remain free from all encumbrances of worldly attachments and attractions. That is, he should be dispassionate towards and detached from everything concerned with the world as well as his body. He remains always contemplative, meditating upon the glorious, radiant and pure Atma. This effort helps him to cleanse himself from all the ills of good or bad deeds that cling to him due to his past (previous) life.

A Sanyasi who discards this body (i.e. dies) after having diligently lived in a righteous way and according to prescribed norms for a life of renunciation and detachment, is indeed called a 'Paramhans' [3].

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—4

HANSA UPANISHAD

This Upanishad is a dialogue between sages Gautam and Sanatkumar. It has only 21 verses. Sage Gautam asks Sanatkumar about 'Brahm Vidya', or that essential and eclectic knowledge that pertains to the truthful, eternal, supreme and transcendental authority in creation known as Brahm. On some earlier occasion this was explained by Lord Shiva to his divine consort Parvati. The Lord has emphasised that this is a very secret knowledge having a profound spiritual reach, and it should be taught or preached only to those who are blessed with the virtues of being mentally steady and intelligent, having total restraint over their sense organs, and are faithful and devoted to their Guru, or a moral preceptor and spiritual guide.

This Upanishad highlights the fact that the Atma or soul is like a divine Swan—a bird considered as a metaphor for purity, cleanliness, divinity, wisdom and enlightenment and from which this Upanishad derives its name—residing subtly in the heart of all the living beings much like fire that is inherently present in wood, and oil is in the sesame seed. To access that Brahm, the sage prescribes the path of Yoga called 'piercing of the so-called six Chakras', which means activating these subtle energy centers in the body. That supreme entity (Atma) resides in the heart which is said to be like an eight petal lotus, and that entity itself is like a pure crystal. The cosmic primordial and primary sound called Naad can be witnessed or heard by concentrating upon this entity through the means of Yoga. It is said that at the peak of this process one is able to witness the supreme transcendental Brahm. This state is akin to the trance-like state called Samadhi which is the successful culmination of meditation. The Vedas also assert that pure conscious, transcendental, enlightened, eternal, infinite, immaculate, almighty, holy, divine, self-illuminated, omnipresent, omniscient, blissful, calm and peaceful Brahm shines through during this state of consciousness.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no.1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. Sage Gautam (approached sage Sanatkumar and) asked, 'Oh Lord! You are an expert in all types of tenets of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility of thoughts and conduct) and well versed in all the scriptures. Please be kind to elucidate to me the path or method by which Brahm Vidya (the truthful and holistic knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental authority of creation known as Brahm) can be acquired or learnt or known by me' (1).
2. Sage Sanatkumar replied, 'Oh Gautam! Listen attentively from me about the conclusion that Lord Shiva arrived at after deeply contemplating upon and debating threadbare all the body of auspicious knowledge pertaining to Dharma that exist in all the different scriptures, and he had described (preached, divulged) what he concluded to his divine consort Parvati (2).
3. This subtle, sublime and esoteric knowledge should not be divulged to an unauthorized, unworthy and incompetent person (such as a stranger, a heretic,

insincere people, an illiterate fool, those who are skeptics etc.). For Yogis (ascetics and those who follow the path of meditation for self-realisation and Brahm-realisation), this profound knowledge is like a treasury. The knowledge that describes the divine form and eclectic location of the holy entity (i.e. the pure conscious Atma which in turn is a manifestation of the supreme Brahm) which is like a Swan is a provider of peace and tranquility as well as emancipation and salvation (3).

4. [This verse tells us about the eligibility criterion for being worthy of hearing and learning this Upanishad and the spiritual knowledge it contains.] The great secret of this knowledge that pertains to the divine and pure self which is the Atma of the individual conceptualized as a Swan, and by extension to the supreme transcendental cosmic Self of creation which is known as Brahm conceptualized as the Param-Hans (literally the great Swan), should be divulged or preached to only worthy and eligible people such as those who are Brahmacharis (i.e. those who observe self restraint over themselves in all matters, and follow the principles of austerity and penance in their lives), those who are of a steady, firmly grounded, calm and tranquil demeanor, those who maintain control over their sense organs and mind, those who are devoted and faithful to their Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual guide), and those who have become self-realised and enlightened about the divine nature of their pure self as being equivalent to the bird Swan by remaining engrossed in contemplation on the fundamental nature of their Atma based upon the teachings of the scriptures (4).

[Note—The enlightened and realised person thinks of himself as a *Swan* and feels exhilarated that he is not an ordinary man bogged down by worldly fetters, but an exalted soul that is like a Swan.

The bird Swan or Hans is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is said to eat pearls, which means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various gems and jewels representing the dazzling charms of this world. It is also reputed to drink milk leaving aside the water content in it symbolising its ability to imbibe the essence and the best, and leave the rest aside. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning, indicating that it bears these glorious virtues. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind —that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his wise words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hans' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the

divine swan, but he was unaware of his own divinity and sublimity, his exalted and noble stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times, because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa'. This concept has been expounded upon in Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 24, 62-63; and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 82-83.]

5. Even as fire is inherently and uniformly present in wood and oil is in the sesame seed, this Atma, which is treated as being equivalent to a Swan, is subtly and imperceptibly present universally in the bodies of all the living creatures of this creation. This all-inclusive knowledge and holistic approach to the world and its inhabitants makes a creature free from the fears of death (5).

[Note—A man fears death because he thinks that once he dies he would lose all the accumulated glories and worldly assets that he had acquired and accumulated by such hard labour over the years in his fruitful life. He has not been able to enjoy them to his satisfaction when he has to die. But this holistic view about the truthful nature of the 'self' who would have enjoyed these fruits of his hard labour creates in him a sense of fulfillment because if the fruits of his labour is enjoyed by others in the society then it is deemed that he has enjoyed them himself. This is because the Atma which is his 'true self' lives in all the creatures, and therefore though he leaves the present body, he still can derive comfort from the idea that he would enjoy them in some other form. This leads to selfless doing of deeds and the man becomes broad in his vision; he does not cringe for his possessions and treats them as belonging to the society. The word 'society' should be treated in the all-inclusive and holistic view of the Upanishads as indicating the entire gamut of creation, and not restricted to any particular group of people or geographical area.

There is another hidden idea here. When a man is enlightened enough to understand what is being said here about his true self as being the pure conscious Atma with all its characteristic attributes which makes it equivalent to the supreme transcendental Being in creation, then the very notion of 'death' becomes irrelevant as that Atma never dies because it is eternal, infinite and without a birth and end. Further, he realises that his body is not his true self, rather it is only a temporary habitat for his self, and he has received it as a result of his past deeds and their consequences. This body is well known to be perishable, while the Atma is imperishable. So there is no relation between them except that of a dwelling and the dweller respectively. Therefore, leaving the body does not mean 'death', and this realisation dispels all fears of the latter.]

6. [The way to acquire knowledge pertaining to this metaphoric Hans or Swan is being described now.] To begin with, the aspirant ascetic should pull up the vital wind (i.e. the Apaana Vayu) from the anus and let it pass upwards from and through the Muladhara Chakra. The wind should then be allowed to swirl around the Swadhisthana Chakra three times, go up into the Manipura Chakra, and then encroach (spread) over the Anahata Chakra.

As a next step, the Pran (the vital wind known as breath) should be held (localized) in the Vishuddha Chakra, and the aspirant should contemplate upon the Ajna Chakra followed by the Brahma Randhra Chakra.

While lifting the Apan wind from the lower end (i.e. from the region of the anus as described above) and concentrating (localizing) the Pran wind at the top (again as described above), the aspirant should be firmly focused on the concept that he is the Trinity Gods¹ personified.

A realised and accomplished ascetic perpetually observes that formless Brahm everywhere, and true to his ideals, he too becomes one like it (i.e. he attains the fourth state of consciousness called Turiya which is obtained during the culmination of Samadhi and is the nearest state which is analogous to Brahm) (6).

[Note--¹These *Trinity Gods* consist of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder. They also signify the entire gamut of creation—right from its beginning to its conclusion. Besides this, Brahma is treated as the wisest in the creation because he produced the Vedas which are repositories of all knowledge that exist in creation, Vishnu symbolises the Viraat Purush who incorporates the entire creation in himself, and Shiva is a treasure of renunciation and asceticism.

There is another connotation of this word *trinity* from the metaphysical point of view. According to the Pranava-panishad, the Atma has three Matras or conceptual aspects. These are indicated by the three letters of the divine Mantra OM, viz. A, U and M. This word is a symbol of Brahm and by extension of the Atma. The first letter 'A' stands for the initiation of creation, the second letter 'U' stands for the extension and rolling forward of the creation, while the last and third letter 'M' stands for conclusion. Interestingly, the Sanskrit word for death is 'Mritu' which starts with 'M'.

²The *Chakras* are the various swirling subtle energy centers in the body.]

7. That 'Paramhans' (literally the supreme and exalted Swan; here referring to Brahm personified as Atma) is splendorous, radiant and brilliant with a light equivalent to uncountable number of Suns. The entire world is illuminated with its bright light (7).

[Note—The Sun's brightness lights up the world and no life can survive without it. The Atma is the only conscious factor present in the dark realm of the gross body. If there was no Atma, if there was no consciousness present in a creature, then the body would be as lifeless as the world without the Sun. The Sun is the only 'self illuminated' entity in the sky; the rest of the planets shine only by its reflected light. Not even the brilliant looking Moon would show up in its glory had it not been for the Sun. That is why the Sun is treated as a visible symbol of Brahm. There is another reason for this choice—no one can practically 'see' the Sun with naked eyes if he does not want to voluntarily become blind by its dazzle, though its presence in the sky is beyond doubt and its existence cannot be denied just because we cannot 'see' it! Similarly, Brahm is indeed there, though we cannot 'see' it directly, but at the most can use indirect methods of logic to do so.]

8. That pure and enlightened conscious entity known as the Hans (i.e. the Swan-like Atma of the individual creature) has eight types of 'Vrittis' (inborn and inherent tendencies, temperaments and habits that determine its character and behavioural patterns). These eight Vrittis reveal themselves, or are conceptualized in the form of eight petals of the symbolic lotus that represents the heart where this entity is seated. These petals are spread uniformly in all the directions, one petal indicating one Vritti, and indicate the various ways in which these Vrittis affect the Swan-like Atma as well as the fact that these are like the tentacles or arms of the Atma by which it interacts with and accepts the world at large. The petal of this lotus facing towards the east represents the righteous and noble inclinations; the petal facing

south-east corner (Agneya) represents sleep, indolence, drowsiness, lethargy, inertia and disinclination to work; the petal facing towards the south direction represents cruel tendencies; the petal facing the south-west angle (Nairitya) represents the inclination of the mind to be sinful, unrighteous and pervert; the petal facing towards the west represents the desires and the intellectual ability for sports, action and play; that petal facing the north-west direction (Vayabya) represents the desire and the ability to be on the move, to go, roam and wander; the petal in the north direction represents the affections of a creature for things that are graceful, gentle, beautiful, attractive, pleasant and charming; the petal in the north-east direction (Ishan) represents the desires for making charity; and the inner layer of petals surrounding the thalamus represent the tendency to renounce, to be dispassionate and detached from the artificial, deluding and sensual world of material objects.

The tendrils of this lotus represent the waking state of consciousness, the stalk represents the dream state of conscious, and the thalamus represents the deep sleep state of consciousness. When a creature represented by the divine Swan flies off from this lotus-like abode in the body (i.e. it abandons the symbolic habitat or dwelling in the 8-petal lotus represented by his heart and rises above its limiting aspects just like a householder snapping all his relationships with his home and taking to the path of Vanprastha), it obtains the fourth state of consciousness called the 'Turiya state'. Eventually, when the creature in the form of his subtle Atma called the Swan, rises high up in the sky representing its spiritual elevation, it virtually gets lost in the depths of the cosmos (sky) and loses its link with its earlier habitat in the heart of the mortal body of the creature. This state is akin to the ascetic getting drowned in the constant stream of the reverberating cosmic sound called 'Naad' that he hears during the successful culmination of his meditative practices. This is called the post Turiya state, or the 'Turiyatit' state (8).

9. In this way, the vibrations created by the activated vital winds, right from the Muladhar Chakra to the Brahm Randhra Chakra, produce a subtle sound resembling the cosmic Naad which reverberates throughout the body of the aspirant. The divine crystal or quartz, which is pure and pristine, creates this cosmic vibration, and this crystal is known as Brahm; it is a metaphor for the esoteric supreme Spirit that is endowed with the magical and mystical powers to resonate own its own and create this vibration known as Naad! (9).

[Note—The quartz crystal is a transparent colourless form of quartz that comes naturally or can also be manufactured. It is used in optics and electronics. Its atoms produce electrical impulses by their vibrations.]

10. When the ascetic thus becomes submerged in the reverberating subtle sound emanating from the divine 'quartz crystal' (the immaculate pure conscious Atma) located in his heart as well as the activated vital winds as described earlier, he is deemed to be doing constant 'Japa' (repetition of some divine Mantras which are mystical words having magical spiritual powers), albeit in a subtle and silent mode. [This is because he does not purposely select any word, even the cosmic word OM, for the purpose of meditation, but the sound which he hears in his mind is the Naad which is crystallised or encrypted in the form of the word OM. His mind is drowned

in this sound, and the numbing and sedative effect is similar to the one obtained by doing constant Japa using a continuous stream of certain words. The sound energy in the cosmic ether is harnessed by Japa, and it is utilized here to activate the symbolic quartz crystal, called the Atma, residing in the heart. This results in the latter's vibrations which translate into spiritual awakening, and obtaining the state of ecstasy and bliss.]

This involuntarily produced sound is a subtle and natural vibration that pervades in all the nerves of the body of the ascetic who hears it. This natural Japa is similar to the practice of consciously and physically repeating Mantras during meditation exercises to concentrate and focus the mind.

Now, every Mantra has six components, and with reference to this silent and involuntarily done Japa, they are the following—(a) the Rishi (the presiding sage or the chief priest who had first conceived the given Mantra and is honoured for it by being invoked in the beginning of the use of this Mantra; he is also the one who presides over its use) is the 'Hans' or the divine Swan representing the Atma of the creature; (b) the Gyatri Chanda (a special type of poetic composition used to compose sacred hymns in the Vedas) is the 'Avyakta', i.e. the indescribable feeling of ecstasy and bliss that accompanies self realisation; (c) the Devta (the patron deity for whom the Mantras are meant) is the Paramhans (the supreme Hans, i.e. the supreme Atma or Brahm); (d) the Beej of this Mantra (or the seed of the Mantra; the root sound of the particular Mantra; the cryptic letters or syllables that are used during occult practices to replace the full Mantra pertaining to a particular God or deity) is 'Hum' or 'Hung'; (e) the Shakti (esoteric mystical divine powers incorporated in any Mantra) of this Mantra is 'Sa'; and finally (f) the Kilak¹ (the peg or nail to which the powers are pegged or nailed) of this Mantra is 'So-a-ham', i.e. 'that is me' (10).

[Note--¹This *Kilak* signifies the fact that this 'Mantra', i.e. the essence of the knowledge contained in the Upanishad, helps the aspirant to remain fixed and steadfast in his beliefs and convictions that he is no one else but Divinity personified, the supreme transcendental Truth personified, Brahm personified. This realisation fills him with wholesome ecstasy, bliss and peace, and gives rest to all his restlessness and perplexities. This spiritual achievement is equivalent to obtaining liberation from the fetters of ignorance and delusions that are the hallmarks of this world, and it delivers him from the vortex of sufferings and pains of remaining trapped in the net of ignorance and delusions. The aspirant realises who his true self is, which is treated in this Upanishad as a divine Swan residing in the lotus like heart of the creature. This Swan represents Brahm in the form of the Atma of the creature. And this Atma is pure consciousness represented by the activated, vibrating quartz crystal.]

11-13. These six subtle divisions of the Mantras are symbolically repeated when one takes twenty one thousand six hundred breaths during the course of a day consisting of twenty four hours called 'Ahoratra'.

While meditating, the ascetic should pronounce the following Mantra while ritualistically purifying the heart and other parts of the body with his hands—'Suryaaye Somaaye Niranjanaaye Niraabhaasaaye Atanu Sukshma Prachodayaaditi Agnishomaabhyam Vaushat'.

[The essential meaning of this Mantra is that the divine Atma present in the heart is as splendourous as the sun, as glorious as the moon, is without any faults and blemishes, is pure, holy and divine, is invisible and without any form, is most subtle, miniscule and microscopic, and is endowed with the effervescent energy present in the fire element.]

After this symbolic purification rite, one should visualise that the divine Hans or Swan (i.e. the Atma) is established in the heart which is like a lotus having eight petals (11-13).

14. The 'fire' (symbolising the sun) and the 'moon' represent the two wings of this divine Swan; the eclectic divine word 'OM' is its head; the geometrical symbol of this word OM is the Sanskrit word 'Ooo' (ॐ) with a dot at the top (i.e. ॐ) and it represents its third eye of wisdom and enlightenment; its mouth is Rudra (one of the ferocious forms of Lord Shiva, the annihilator of creation); its two feet are represented by Rudrani (the divine consort of Rudra). This symbolic form of divinity has two forms—viz. one that is visible and the other that is not visible representing the creature and the Atma respectively. Just like the Swan makes its presence felt by making a sound in its throat, the aspirant ascetic should also hear the Naad in the form of the sound of breath passing through his throat during his meditative trance and realise the presence of the divine Swan representing the supreme Brahm in the form of his Atma residing in his bosom.

The constant reverberation of the Naad makes him like a man in trance who remains unconcerned with and oblivious of the world of sense objects around him. This state results in the de-facto conclusion or elimination of the world without doing any specific Japa of Mantras to achieve this objective.

[That is, if the ascetic has developed enough expertise to remain perpetually engrossed in hearing the subtle sound of the Naad reverberating ceaselessly in his mind and nerves, he feels sedated and tranquilized. The same effect is produced by regular practice of Yoga wherein the practitioner repeats a particular word as designated Mantra prescribed to focus the mind and prevent it from being restless. See also verse no. 10.] (14).

15. All the thoughts processes become subordinated to this symbolic divine Hans/Swan representing the Atma. In other words, the ascetic keeps contemplating upon the Atma residing in his own body (15).

16-17. When a sincere aspirant has repeated the Mantra (So-a-ham, i.e. 'that is me' as described in verse no. 4) ten Koti times (i.e. 100 million times), he is able to witness (i.e. hear the reverberation of) the cosmic Naad. This cosmic resonating vibration has ten sound forms, or cosmic varieties of sound or music emanating from it—(i) clinking of bracelets, (ii) tinkling of anklets, (iii) the deep reverberation and resonating clanging sound of a gong hitting a brass bell, (iv) the sharp blowing of a conch shell, (v) the playing of stringed musical instrument (e.g., lute, harp, guitar), (vi) the clap or clonking sound of crashing cymbals, (vii) the shrill but soothing and haunting sound of a flute, (viii) the beating of tumbrels, (ix) the sound of kettle drums, and (x) the rumbling and thundering of cloud.

The spiritual seeker would hear these sounds in a progressive manner as his meditation moves ahead towards reaching its pinnacle of spiritual accomplishment. The sounds or music are first heard in a mixed cacophony, and then they begin to separate into distinct genres of sound clearly discernible by the aspirant (16).

He should endeavour to forgo the first nine forms of Naad and instead concentrate his attention on the last form, i.e. the thundering and rumbling of clouds (17).

[Note—(1) The various subtle sounds emanating from the cosmic vibration called the Naad have been elaborately described in Naad-Bindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition; it has been included in the volume dealing with such Upanishads in this series.]

18-20. As a result of the vibrations created by this Naad having ten subtle forms as described above, the body experiences different types of emotional feelings, each feeling being specific to that particular form of Naad. These feelings reveal themselves in the form of various reflexes of the body¹.

The 1st sound creates a tickling sensation. The 2nd sound creates tense or taut muscles leading to spasms. The 3rd sound leads to perspiration breaking out from the body. The 4th sound creates tremors in the head. The 5th sound creates saliva to dribble out of the mouth. The 6th sound causes 'a rain of Amrit' (which is a metaphor for tears of bliss). The 7th sound bestows upon the aspirant the blessing of being acquainted with the profoundest and most secret of knowledge. The 8th sound enables the aspirant to speak in a mystical language. [That is, he can speak in any tongue, he can speak of things unknown, he can speak of the wisest of things, his speech acquires the potent and prowess of possessing divine powers]. The 9th sound enables the aspirant to make himself invisible and he acquires the so-called '3rd eye' having mystical and divine powers of insight and infinite vision. Finally, when the aspirant hears the 10th sound, he acquires the transcendental and eclectic knowledge pertaining to the supreme Brahm, and as a result he experiences or witnesses the esoteric and sublime presence of the supreme Brahm first hand (18-20).

[Note--¹The reflex actions of the muscles in the body are controlled by the brain. When the nerves of the brain—which is actually an electronic circuit consisting of a fine maze of ganglions, nerve fibers and nerve endings much like an integrated circuit of a computer—are impacted by these sound waves emanating from the cosmic 'Naad' which tend to interfere with and modify their working much like the interference of the electronically charged particles of the solar wind with the radio transmission on earth, the impulses or electric signals which are given by the brain to other parts of the body also get effected or modified. This results in the muscles of the body reacting differently to different wavelengths or frequencies of the various sound waves emanating from the sea of sound called the 'Naad'. Each individual reaction of the body will therefore correspond to particular frequencies or wavelength that the aspirant is hearing at that instant. As a natural corollary, it follows that by observing the reflexes of the aspirant's body, we can determine at what spiritual level he is prevailing at that moment.]

21. When the mind and the heart dissolve and become one with the indescribable fathomless entity (known as Brahm) and lose their independent identity and existence, then all doubts and confusions, all perplexities and consternations that had existed till the time this did not happen, collapse into their primary source, the Mana (i.e. the emotional as well as thinking mind and the sentimental heart) of the aspirant.

[That is, once the mind and heart cease to exist, there is no scope for the man to make so many resolves, have so many desires, get involved in so many things pertaining to this mundane artificial world. In fact, this world itself ceases to exist because the existence of the world is due to

the mind; it is the mind that conceives and then gives this world a shape as well as any importance at all. This is proved by the fact that when we are not interested in anything, or when we are not aware that such and such thing exists, then we are not concerned about it at all. It is only when the mind gets to know about it that it starts thinking about it and getting restless about it.]

Since the mind and heart do not exist, then all the deeds—whether they be good and auspicious, known as ‘Punya’, or bad and inauspicious, known as ‘Paap’ or sinful—cease to matter. With non-involvement in any type of deed, the typical chain of deed-consequence-new deed is disrupted, and the creature is freed from their trap.

Such an exalted and liberated ‘Hans’ or Swan (here referring to the realised and enlightened person) then perpetually lives as a personification of the eternal Shiva (truth, bliss, auspiciousness, wisdom, enlightenment) and his Shakti (divine, mystical and eclectic powers, energy, strength and authority). He becomes so exalted in stature that he becomes synonymous with his Atma and therefore exhibits all the virtues of the latter—such as being all-pervading and omnipresent, being self-illuminated, being pure and uncorrupt, being wise, erudite and enlightened, being eternal, perpetual and infinite, being without any faults, flaws, shortcomings and blemishes, being peaceful, tranquil, serene, calm and quiet. Being endowed with these divine, holy and eclectic qualities, he shines in this world with his radiant, bright and splendorous virtue and glory. This is the assertion of the Vedas.

With this, this Upanishad comes to a conclusion (21).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—5

PARAMHANSA UPANISHAD

This Upanishad has only four Mantras or verses in which the celestial sage Narad asks Lord Vishnu about the characteristic features, signs and norms of a type of Sanyasi (renunciate ascetic, an itinerant monk, friar or hermit) known as ‘Paramhans’. This Upanishad should be read along with other Upanishads on this subject of Sanyas. Especially relevant are the two Upanishads of this volume, viz. Jabalopanishad, sections 4-6 which is chapter no. 3, and Turiyatitopanishad which is chapter no. 14.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 of this volume for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. Once upon a time, the celestial sage Narad went to Lord Vishnu and asked him, ‘Oh Lord! Amongst renunciate ascetics, what is the condition and characteristic features of a ‘Paramhans’, and what path do they follow (i.e. what rules do they observe, whom do they worship, what is their routine life etc.)?’

Hearing this, the Lord replied, 'The path followed by a Paramhans Sanyasi is very difficult and rare in this world. Such people who follow this path honestly and diligently are also very rare. Only a few people can become a true Paramhans Sanyasi. They remain perpetually engrossed in the most holy, pious and divine state of mental bearing. Such Paramhans Sanyasis are an embodiment of the Vedas; they represent what the Vedas preach and they exemplify their tenets in practical life—this is the belief of those who are wise, expert, erudite and well versed in this subject.

The mind and intellect of such persons are ever engrossed and focused on me (Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of the creation and the Viraat Purush who is the Lord from whom even Brahma, the creator of the visible world and the Vedas, is said to have emerged). I too am firmly established in their bosom.

A Paramhans Sanyasi forsakes all ties with his worldly relatives such as his kith and kin, his son and wife, his friends and brothers etc. He even discards his links with all such external signs of Sanyas such as keeping a tuft of hair on the top of the head (cranium), the sacred thread, the studying of the scriptures, and all other traditional formalities, observances of different sacraments and rituals that are associated with a religious way of life. He bears his life or body for the welfare of the world at large. He wears just enough clothes to sustain that body, i.e. he just covers his body to maintain decorum and to protect it from the vagaries of Nature—e.g. he wears only a loin cloth and a sheet to cover his body with. He carries only a ascetic's staff called the 'Danda'. [This Danda is like a scepter held by a king; it is a symbol of his spiritual kingship and distinguishes him from the rest of the people; it is his symbol of moral and spiritual authority.]

But actually and frankly speaking, even these are not the correct and truthful symbols or signs of a 'true' Paramhans Sanyasi.'

Surprised, Narad asked, 'Then oh Lord, what are those signs or symbols?' (1).

[Note—The word *Paramhans* has two parts—viz. 'Param' which means the best, the most exalted, the superior one, the exemplary character or the grand eclectic virtues exhibited by a person, while the second word 'Hans' refers to the bird Swan which is considered as the wisest amongst the birds because of its reputation of picking the best of all available. Refer Hanso-panishad, Chapter 4. Therefore, a Paramhans Sanyasi is one who is the best amongst all categories of renunciate ascetics or hermits. He is deemed to have graduated from being a simple renunciate into an enlightened and self-realised person for whom all formalities and formal forms of worship and signs that are used as a constant reminder for the aspirant that he belongs to a particular school of thought and philosophy, that he is supposed to adhere to his sanctioned code of conduct and behaviour, that he is supposed to diligently avoid doing anything that is not behooving of his exalted stature, that he has taken certain exemplary religious vows and he should be careful about them lest he would fall from his chosen path of spiritualism, and that the world would look up to him for an example and so he should be very careful about what he does, says and how he behaves—are not needed and not necessary. In fact he has even gone beyond any worldly yardsticks for measuring his enlightenment, mystical abilities, or of the degree of holiness, purity and sincerity as a spiritually exalted soul.]

2. The main rules and codes of conduct that are mandated for a Paramhans Sanyasi and expected to be adhered by him are the following—He should not hold (carry) a staff (Danda) nor wear a tuft of hair on the head (called the Shikha); he should not wear the sacred thread or any covering on the body. He should be free from such notions as having the perception of cold and heat, of insult and honour, of happiness and joys as well as sufferings and miseries. [That is, he should treat all circumstances

with stoic equanimity and fortitude, remaining absolutely unruffled, calm and poised; he should not be upset or become restless even during great emotional upheavals.]

He abandons all the following traits—‘Ninda’ or finding faults with others and criticizing them; ‘Garva’ or having any kind of false ego, pride and arrogance; ‘Matsarya’ or having envy, jealousy, ill-will and malice towards others; ‘Darpa’ or having self praise, pretensions of greatness and self glorification; ‘Ichha’ or having desires, expectations, interests, wants etc.; ‘Dwesh’ or having enmity, hatred, aversion, animosity, resentment, rancour, spite and malice; ‘Sukh’ or the notion of happiness, joys, comfort and pleasure; ‘Dukh’ or the opposite notions of Sukh, i.e. the perception of sorrows, anguish, grief, sufferings, miseries, agonies and pains; ‘Kaam’ or worldly passions, desires, lust, yearning for sensual gratification etc.; ‘Krodh’ or vengeance, anger, wrathfulness, being susceptible to short temper; ‘Lobh’ or greed, avarice, yearnings and rapacity; ‘Moha’ or having attachments and affections, being enamoured and infatuated, having delusions and ignorance; ‘Harsh’ or having the feeling of exhilaration, ecstasy, excessive joy, exultation, gladness, gratefulness; ‘Asuya’ or pricking holes with others, having jealousy and envy; ‘Ahankar’ or having pride, ego, arrogance, hypocrisy, haughtiness; and all other such negative traits.

He treats his body as being good as dead. [See chapter 14, Turiyatit Upanishad in this context.] All his doubts and confusions as well as falsehoods and illusions are dispelled. He is an embodiment of eternal enlightenment and is a self-realised person who expects nothing from this world. He is firmly convinced that his true identity or his true self (which is his Atma) is a stable, constant, infinite and eternal entity; it is matchless in its bliss and felicity; it is pure consciousness personified.

He believes that this firm faith in his ‘true self’ is akin to being established in the supreme abode of Brahm. That is, he is convinced that this realisation about the eternal, imperishable, pure and divine nature of the conscious and enlightened Atma, which is his true ‘self’, makes him fearless from being uprooted from a temporary residence or abode and becoming a homeless vagabond. He feels that he has his Atma as his permanent residence. He believes that since the Atma is his truthful identity, and since the Atma is eternal and imperishable, he too has these grand qualities. [In other words, the realisation that he is not the gross perishable body but the sublime imperishable Atma, that this Atma is where the supreme Brahm resides, and that this Atma is a microcosm of the cosmic Consciousness that prevails uniformly everywhere in the world, instills a sense of fearlessness of becoming homeless if the body dies, or when he has left his walled household behind. For now onwards, the entire world becomes his home.]

He also believes that this firm faith is also like the symbolic tuft of hair on the head (on the cranium) and the sacred thread across his shoulders (which are external symbols or insignia to remind him that he belongs to the group of wise and elderly people who are supposed to be awakened and self-realised, and which are regarded as the quintessential marks of a man of high birth).

He treats the Atma and the Parmatma (i.e. the individual soul at the microcosmic level and the supreme transcendental Soul of the creation at the macrocosmic level) as being synonymous with each other. That is, he firmly believes in the concept of ‘non-duality’. For him, there is no distinction between the two. This erudition and eclectic knowledge is the symbolic sacrament called ‘Sandhya’ as far as he is concerned. [Sandhya is a ritual of prayer offered to the Gods three times a day when two time zones meet, e.g. at dawn when the night meets the day, at noon when the sun is at its zenith, and at dusk which is the meeting point of the day and the night. Since he believes in non-duality, there is no difference for him between the day and

the night, or between the pre-noon hours and the post-noon hours. In other words, he can offer prayers to the God at all times of the day and night; in fact he is expected to remain constantly and perpetually in a meditative state of being focused on his chosen deity.] (2).

3. He forsakes all forms of desires, hopes and expectations, and remains ever engrossed in the thoughts of the non-dual supreme transcendental Brahm. He is also known as 'Ek Dandi', i.e. one who carries only one staff. This is a symbolic way of asserting that he relies upon only one support, and that is 'Gyan', or truthful knowledge of the ultimate reality which is achieved by wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. This Gyan makes him firmly established in the rock solid truth about his real self, and it is his Atma which is Brahm personified.

On the other hand, a person who holds an external wooden staff or scepter as a symbol of his exalted stature as a Sanyasi in society, but remains mentally attached to the world, being internally engrossed or submerged in its thoughts or having any kind of worldly hopes, desires and expectations, is ignorant of the 'truth'. He is devoid of such eclectic and glorious virtues as true renunciation, contentedness, truthful knowledge, dispassion, detachment, tolerance, fortitude, forbearance etc. which are the hallmarks of a Sanyasi. Such a man just maintains a false façade of being a Sanyasi; he is being deceitful and is an imposter. He has undermined and destroyed the august institution of Sanyas. Such a person goes to the lowest form of hell known as 'Raurav'. Those who understand this difference between a real Sanyasi and an imposter who acts as a Sanyasi but is isn't are verily true 'Paramhans' (i.e. they are like a wise Swan which has the unique ability to pick and choose what is auspicious and good, and discard what is not). [In other words, a person who understands that external signs or symbols or insignia can cheat the world but not the self is a really realised one. For him, there is therefore no need for wearing the tuft of hair, a sacred thread or holding the staff. What he endeavours is to inculcate the grand, eclectic and holy qualities mentioned above in this verse, such as conquering Ninda, Garva, Matsarya, Darpa etc. Such conquest would indeed be beneficial for his spiritual progress.] (3).

4. He remains free from all expectations of honour and respect as long as he is alive, such as expectation of anyone bowing before him, or anyone offering him gifts or even food to eat. He does not expect anyone honouring and remembering and paying homage to him after his death. He does not pay any heed to being criticised, and remains emotionally calm and unexcited even upon being praised and honoured. He has highest degree of equanimity and forbearance. He remains an itinerant friar or a wandering ascetic or roaming monk willingly and voluntarily throughout the rest of his life (and not forced to do so due to adverse circumstances).

For him there are no traditional rules to be rigidly followed, such as invocation of Gods and offering prayers and oblations to them, dispersing of the invited Gods at the end of a religious ritual or ceremony, chanting or repetition of Mantras, contemplation and meditation, or worship and adoration of any deity. In fact, he has no aim in life and no fear from any quarter; he is under no obligation of any God or any religious sect or dispensation. [This is because he has realised Brahm as his own true self in the form of his Atma, who is the supreme deity. Therefore, he need not worship anyone else.]

Since he believes in 'non-duality', there is no notion of anything being separate or distinct from any other thing; there is no such idea/concept as mine and

yours. He is completely neutral and dispassionate, and therefore it does not matter to him whether anything is universal or not, whether it is uniform or not. [That is, he has no emotions and notions at all; he does not bother or thinks about anything at all; it does not matter to him whether two given entities are different or same; whether anything belongs to you or me. He is equanimity, fortitude, dispassion and indifference personified.]

He has no permanent residence (because he is always on the move), yet he has a stable mind and intellect which do not wander around aimlessly. [That is, his residence is not fixed at one place, but his mind is fixed.] He does not endeavour to accumulate gold and other material things of this world. No object of this world appears too attractive for him, and neither do they look repulsive to him. So, what can hinder his way; what can stop him? A Paramhans mendicant who yearns for gold (or any material wealth of this world) is deemed to have committed a grave sin which is equivalent to killing a Brahmin. He is no better than a Chandala (a low outcaste person who performs the last rites of dead bodies in the cremation ground and stays away from villages and population areas). Hence, a mendicant Paramhans should neither see, touch or accept gold from any source. All such desires of a true Paramhans are automatically destroyed and annihilated. Therefore, he is fully fulfilled and contented.

He does not become agitated or restless during sorrows and bad times, and neither does he get excited and thrilled during happy and favourable times. He abandons all forms of 'Raag' or the sense of attachment, longing, infatuation, affection and endearments towards all. He treats both auspicious and inauspicious circumstances with exemplary equanimity and fortitude. He keeps no hatred, ill-will, malice, animosity and rancour towards anyone, nor does he feel endeared to them, or has any emotional attachment with anything or anybody. He does not feel happy and joyous, nor does he feel otherwise.

All his sense organs have become calmed down; they have lost their inherent restless and fidgety nature. He remains ever engrossed in contemplation and meditation upon his eternal Atma which is his essential self. He regards himself as full of pure bliss and happiness; he treats himself as a fount of beatitude and felicity. He regards himself as an embodiment of enlightenment and wisdom; as an embodiment of the supreme transcendental Brahman.

With this firm conviction and faith, he becomes grateful, obliged, fulfilled, contented and accomplished in a wholesome way (4).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—6

SUBAL UPANISHAD

Propounded by sage Subal, and hence bearing his name, this Upanishad covers a wide swathe of Upanishadic philosophy in a very succinct manner. It has in all 16 cantos and basically expounds on the supremacy of the Atma over anything else in this creation. It describes magnificently the various characteristics of the Atma, its relevance and importance.

This Upanishad enunciates a philosophy that establishes a synergy between the grossest aspect of creation and its subtlest components, between the microcosm and the macrocosm represented by the individual creature and the one single Supreme Being, called Brahm, respectively. Here, intellectual deliberation is done to seek wisdom called Gyan. This cultivates inner enlightenment which is the realisation of the 'lighted, divine self', the Atma or soul, which is pure consciousness. This Upanishad facilitates understanding of the unique 'non-dual' nature of Divinity.

Cantos 1 and 2 beautifully and graphically describe the genesis of creation. It is a reply by sage Ghorangiras to a question asked by sage Raikwa. It describes the creation of the world and how the Viraat Purush created all the classes in society, the elements such as the vital wind called Pran (or the life sustaining air) and its various manifestations, the Vedas, the myriad forms of the plant and the animal kingdoms, the human race, etc.

Cantos 3 to 5 deal with the concept of the supreme Atma. Canto 3 describes its supremacy over everything else. It describes its fundamental nature, virtues and characteristics. Canto 4 tells us about its habitat in the heart of a creature, and the way this Atma interacts with the world in the three states of consciousness that it exists. Canto 5 enumerates the fundamental forms of worship of this eclectic and ethereal Atma.

Canto 6 postulates that Narayan (the Viraat Purush as Vishnu) is all that there is in this creation; all the different forms of creation, animate or inanimate, visible or invisible, from the microcosm right up to the fathomless macrocosm, are all nothing else but the different revelation or manifestation of one same entity, the supreme, ubiquitous Authority called Lord Narayan.

Canto 7 establishes that all the elements in creation, such as Apaha (water), Tej (energy, vitality, radiance and splendour as well as glory, majesty and mystical powers that are inherent in all the basic elements of creation), Vayu (wind), the Mana (mind and heart, the thoughts and emotions) etc. have the same conscious factor present in all of them which renders them with their respective importance, significance, glories and powers. This 'factor' is the subtle, sublime and imperceptible form of the supreme cosmic consciousness that is the only Authority in creation; it is that authority that not only 'powers' these primary subtle elements of creation, but also 'empowers' the gross sense organs of the creature to act and carry out their assigned functions.

Canto 8 is an extension of canto 4 in as much as it expands on the concept of the pure conscious Atma residing in the cavernous interiors of the heart of a creature.

Canto 9 describes the 'withdrawal symptoms' akin to the death process wherein all the tentacles spread out by the creature in the form of the sense organs of perception, such as the eye, the nose, the ears etc., withdraw into themselves and finally collapse into a state called 'Turiya' which is the 4th state of consciousness and is tantamount to obtaining the state of 'Samadhi'. In other words, this Canto describes the process of dissolution and retrogression of creation.

Canto 10 visualises this creation as a vast sphere having concentric strata or circles representing different worlds. These concentric rings or layers represent the different worlds that constitute the fabric of the cosmos; each layer stands for a particular world. At the center of the pile is the creature established or living in the mortal world, called the Prithivi, or earth, which incidentally is supposed to be the foundation upon which the rest of the creation rests. The earth is established in the surrounding space, called the Akash, the Firmament, and this progression continues till the outer ring representing Brahm is reached. This Brahm is the periphery outside

which nothing exists. This fantastic and incredulous entity encircles everything from all sides; there is nothing beyond it! This is the outer boundary of the cosmos.

The miracle is that Brahm, which encloses the creation from all sides, also pervades uniformly throughout it as its conscious Atma much like the water which soaks and completely surrounds a piece of sponge placed in a water tank. As far as the sponge is concerned, there is no distinction between the water that surrounds it and the water that is present in its minute pores.

Canto 11 narrates how the Atma makes its exit from the body.

Cantos 12 and 13 deal with the concept of Sanyas as a way of life marked by total renunciation that comes with self-realisation of the truth. It describes the life, thought processes and the behaviors of such a person called a Sanyasi.

Canto 14 enumerates how one element is annihilated or consumed by another; or how one collapses and merges with the one superior to it. It is like a folding telescope, when finally 'death', the one with a rapacious and unsatisfied hunger, is itself devoured by Brahm when the former collapsed and merges with the latter. This reminds one of the ultimate collapse of the cosmos into the nothingness from where it came into being at the time of the 'big bang' which marked the beginning of the cosmos. Marvelously told, this canto also visualises what remains after the final annihilation, a situation alike the creation of the 'black hole', and beyond!

Canto 15 is an extension of the concepts enunciated in canto 14, but in the context of the Pran. It describes how Pran annihilates everything that exists once it decides to make its exit from the body of the creature. This is a metaphor describing that nothing remains after death, and that nothing matters after death. This knowledge (Vidya) provides liberation and deliverance because it removes all misconceived delusions and hallucinations caused by ignorance of the truth pertaining to the falsehood and perishable nature of the material attractions of the world and the futility of having attachments with them.

Finally, canto 16 winds up the metaphysical discussion by describing the importance and significance of this Upanishad along with the benefits that it provides to those who understand its import.

In short, this Upanishad describes the divine, holy, ethereal and esoteric virtues of the supreme entity called the Atma which imbrues and imbues the entire creation from within and from without. It is very similar to Adhyatmo-panishad which is chapter no. 15 of this anthology.

---Shanti Paath---

Canto 1

[This Canto, along with Canto 2, describe the genesis of creation. It bears a striking resemblance to Aeiteriyo-panishad and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 1 amongst others. See note of verse no. 2.]

1. [In a congregation of sages and seers, one of them named Raikwa asked the senior most amongst the assembly, one wise sage named Ghorangiras--] 'What was there before the creation came into being?'

[Sage Ghorangiras replied--] 'Before the beginning, everything was at rest (i.e. there was no activity). There was neither the concept nor notion of any falsehood or of anything which could be distinguished and classified as being either the apparent

truth or the real, truthful Truth, or even an admixture of these. (See also canto 2, verse no. 4 and its note)'. [1]

2. [When asked what happened next or what was created first followed by other aspects of creation, the wise sage continued with his explanation and exposition on the process of creation.] 'From this primordial, primary and fundamental state, which preceded the creation and everything else, was produced 'Tama'¹. From this Tam was produced the different 'Bhuts'² and other elements (such as 'Ahankar' or the negative trait of pride and ego, 'Akshar' or the Word, 'Abyakta' or that which was not manifest and had no attributes which could be defined in tangible terms, the 'Tanmatras' or the senses of perception, etc.). These were the basic and primary building blocks for the would-be creation; these were the fundamental aspects and imperceptible subtle elements of creation.

From these Bhuts and other primary elements came into existence the 'Akash' or the Firmament, the cosmic space or the sky element (which would eventually fill the great void present before the creation was born; also ether).

From the sky element emerged the wind element called 'Vayu' (because the ether had vibrations due to friction; these vibrations produced waves, which in turn created what came to be known as wind or air).

From the wind/air was produced the fire element called 'Agni' (due to the frictional energy of the waves present in ether).

From the fire was created the water element called 'Apaha' (because the heat of the fire melted the solidified primordial gel which virtually overflowed and doused that fire as a natural ecological counter balancing factor. [These two steps of wind producing fire and fire producing water are evident during the summer and rainy seasons respectively. When hot wind starts blowing across the plains, we get the feeling that an actual flame of fire is scorching the skin, though there is no visible fire in the hot wind. Similarly, the wind (air) and the heat (fire) are responsible for evaporation of water from the ocean, formation of rain-bearing clouds and their movement. So, the water element in the form of rain is their virtual offspring.]

And finally, from the water was produced the grossest and the heaviest earth element called 'Prithivi'. [As the cosmic gel cooled because of the induction of water element, its heavier ingredients settled down and formed various layers depending upon the density, specific gravity, and such other physical forces of Nature that automatically came into play. That is why earth shows a phenomenal degree of variation in its structural layers. An entire field of science known as geology deals with it.] [2].

[Note—(a) The sequence of events leading to the present universe has been a subject of discussion in a number of Upanishads. Each describes this fundamental process in its own unique way. The variance in the narrations is because each 'seer' who visualised this process in his mind explained it in his own way. Though the basics remain the same, the actual details varied because of the different angles from which the process was viewed or conceived by that particular seer or sage. Consequentially, the aspect which he wished to emphasis found prominence in his version.

Some of the major Upanishads describing the genesis of creation are, inter alia, the following:--(1) The Rig Veda—Aeitereyo, Mudgal, Bhavaricho and Chaturvedo Upanishads; (2) The Sam Veda—Chandogya (3/19/1-4, and 6/3/1-6), and Mahopanishad (canto 1); (3) The Shukla Yajur Veda—Brihad Aranyaka (canto 1), Painglo, and Trishiki Brahmin Upanishads; (4) The Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad; and (5) Atharva Veda—Parbrahm Upanishad. Each of these Upanishads

has been included in the relevant volumes of this series of Upanishads classified according to the Vedas.

(b) What was present before anything came into being was neither true nor false. That is, it is impossible to assign any definition or any set of attributes, virtues or characteristics to that entity, and demarcate it in specific terms. Everything was in a flux. In other words, it is beyond comprehension and specific description. What appears to be true is actually false, and what appears false on its face is in fact the truth. This is the great paradox which the Vedas have succinctly summed up in the following words—‘Neti Neti’, or ‘not this, not this’. In other words, neither this nor that is the correct thing, for it is impossible to fix the truth with any degree of certainty because it is simply beyond the reach of comprehension.

From this mysterious ‘nothingness’ was born *Tam*¹. The word Tam has many connotations—viz. darkness, ignorance, mean qualities, lowliness and anything that is not noble and righteous, not virtues and good. In physical terms it implies the darkness that prevailed everywhere before the creation came into existence; it was like the dark night after the sun has set over the horizon. In metaphysical terms it refers to the darkness symbolising ignorance and delusions. It was this all encompassing darkness that led the cosmic soul resting peacefully to imagine there are ‘Bhuts’ or ghosts in the cosmic void around it. This situation is analogous to the case when a person begins to see phantoms and spirits in darkness. The imagining cosmic soul saw the different elements taking various shapes and forms like the ghosts of the night. This allusion has significance; it tells us that if the enlightened cosmic soul could see ghosts and even imagine them to be true, though knowing fully well that such things have no real existence and there are simply creations of a hallucinating mind, there is no wonder in ordinary creatures getting deluded and falling prey to ignorance. The wisdom lies in realising the reality of the situation and waking up from this dream.

There is another way at looking at this thing. The primordial gel was neutral and inactive. To make anything neutral, all its active ingredients cancel each other out. The basic ingredients that determine the natural behaviour and temperament of the living world are the three qualities called the Trigunas. They are ‘Sata’ or the best virtues in a creature, such as righteousness, nobility of thought and action, spiritual awakensness etc.; ‘Raja’ or the medium qualities which lead to worldly desires, good passions and hopes, such as the desire to attain fame and fortunes etc.; and ‘Tama’ or the meanest of the three qualities which are considered evil, sinful and pervert. Now, these had neutralized each other in the sterile, primordial, homogenous cosmic gel. It is out of ignorance that someone assigns a name to this neutral entity. One erroneously says that it was Narayan, or Hiranyagarbh, or Viraat Purush etc. It in fact had no name! Slowly and over time, these three basic elements that decided the nature of creation began to separate from one another and lose their homogeneous, indistinguishable nature. As soon as this began to happen, it is natural that varying shades and hues of forms started taking shape depending upon the ratio and the amount of any one of these qualities present in each individual form that began to crystallize.

This happened in a natural way and according to the basic principles of physics—the heavier element, the Tama, started concentrating at the bottom; the lighter element, the Sata, floated at the top; while the Raja dispersed between the two layers. The partition line was blurred and diffused and not sharp, with one Guna gradually becoming less prominent in the region dominated by the other. This is how the three worlds came into being. The grossest Tama Guna settled at the bottom of the cosmic primordial gel to form the mortal world represented by the word ‘Bhu’ and the earth. The medium Raja Guna filled the space above it in the form of the sky represented by the word ‘Bhuvaha’. And the lightest and most sublime of the three Gunas, the Sata, floated at the top to form the heavens, called ‘Swaha’. Finally, the organic matter settled on the layer at the bottom to form the creatures that would roam upon the

surface of the earth, represented by the word 'Janaha'. This is how our world came into being. See verse no. 3.

(c) The word *Bhut*² used here has a number of implications. It literally means 'something of the past, gone, that had been; something which is like anything else; consisting of, mixed or joined with; that which is or exists; any living entity (divine, human, animal or of the plant kingdom); the world; a spirit, a ghost, a phantom'. The word also refers to 'the elements' that came into existence before the creation appeared as we know it today. All these meanings fit into the use to which the word is put. The five Bhuts or elements, such as earth, water, fire, wind and space, formed the basic bricks with which the creation was built; they were the primary ingredients which combined in innumerable permutations and combinations to transform themselves into what we see today as the majestic world.

But the word warns us that all this was like a ghost or phantom, because these are also the meanings of this word Bhut. The world that was created was false and imaginary; it had no real existence. All the different names given to its myriad manifestations were similarly false and of no relevance and substance. As we have seen above in this note, everything was created or imagined in the mind of the cosmic soul in the backdrop of 'darkness'. The metaphysical implication is obvious here—the past tense to which the word Bhut alludes indicates that everything is behind us and wisdom lies in looking ahead. It also implies that since each passing moment becomes an imaginary Bhut in the next moment, we cannot change it, but at the same time, we can change the future by realising the truth and reality of the situation, and therefore endeavouring to change the present. That is, though a person had been engulfed by the darkness of ignorance in his past, he should immediately wake up from his sleep of delusions and take remedial measures to 'create' a real and truthful 'life' for himself and others in the present by understanding the great and unequivocal Truth about this creation just like a new creation was created from void of darkness! He must realise that the world that is seen and seems so real and true is indeed false and mirage-like. Hence, it is futile to pursue it blindly.

In other words, though a man was ignorant of the truth and reality till now, but once he has come to know about it by studying the scriptures, he should ensure that he does not fall in the trap of birth and death again. He should be filled with regrets and renunciation; he will be inspired to take the path of Sanyas which culminates in his final liberation and deliverance from the entrapping and deceptive world. It's natural that this Upanishad deals with the concept of Sanyas in detail in its latter half.

The allusion to ghosts and phantoms is apt because it is in darkness that one sees scary figures. The Upanishad advises that a wise man should be wary of this world just like he is wary of the scary spirits of the dark night. When the light of enlightenment dawns on the horizon of a man's intellect and mind just like the sun appearing at dawn, all his delusions and hallucinations arising out of ignorance vanish just like the ghosts and phantoms disappear on the arrival of the sun. This fact is highlighted in canto 7-15 of this Upanishad.]

3. These basic ingredients (of verse no.2) coalesced to mould themselves into the primordial egg-shaped universe. The Purush (the vital spark of life, the mysterious conscious factor subtly and inherently present as an integral aspect and attribute of that jelly that formed the body of the cosmic egg) stayed in it during its incubation period of one year, called the Samwatsar. It then divided its self into two sections or parts. The heavier, grossest part settled at the lower half and it became the earth. The lighter, subtler parts rose to the upper location to become the sky. Between these two, the Purush manifested himself in his divine and magnificent glory. [This Purush was the Viraat, the macrocosmic gross body that symbolised the sum total of all the bodies that would form in the upcoming creation. The umpteen numbers and varieties of

creatures living on the earth represented his legs, while those of the sky symbolised his head. That is why--] This Purush had thousands of heads, eyes, legs and arms [3].

[Note—(1) The word *thousands* is only a figure of speech to indicate the numerous and uncountable number and variety of creatures that the Purush represents in his person. When the cosmic egg hatched, each tiny fraction of it formed a particular type of creature having a set of distinguishing feature. See also note to verse no. 2

(2) The wise and learned sage is mentally ‘seeing’ what the scenario might have been that unfolded at the time of creation of the universe. To begin with, there was no activity as symbolised by the cosmic soul resting in the darkness of the pre-creation night. Then when the ripe time came, it showed some subtle activity which resulted in letting loose a chain of reactions. The first indication that something was happening was when the otherwise static and stable homogeneous cosmic fluid began to get separated into lighter and heavier components as described in this verse. If we churn any mixture, say for example milk which looks one homogeneous liquid but consists of so many ingredients, then butter comes to the surface and any residual matters present in the milk would settle at the bottom. This is how sedimentation happens in Nature. This is exactly what happened at that time.]

4. He (Viraat Purush) first created ‘death’ for all the creatures. The physical form of death had three eyes, three heads and three legs. This form of death personified was called ‘Khand Parashu’. [4]

[Note—The form of death with three eyes is called *Triyambak*; it is another name for Lord Shiva who is one of the Trinity Gods and the one responsible with the task of bringing the creation to a conclusion. He is said to have emerged from Viraat Purush’s forehead when the latter deeply meditated in order to initiate the process of creation. According to Canto 2, verse no. 1 of this Upanishad, he emerged from the creased forehead of the angry creator Brahma. Lord Shiva is also known as *Pashupati*, or the lord of all animal like creatures. Here the word ‘animal’ refers not to a particular class of living creature belonging to the zoological kingdom but ‘animal-like instincts’ even in a highly evolved creature such as a man. Since base, crass, lowly and gross behaviour makes a man stoop from his higher stature in the hierarchy of evolution, and instead become an animal that leads symbolically to his downfall, Lord Shiva punishes him for his misdeeds and sins by condemning him to death. Here, death not merely means physical death, but his degradation from the heaven to the lower hell. The word *Khand* alludes to this downfall, demotion and degradation. A person who is wise and enlightened will not die in the conventional sense because he would have realised that death occurs only of the physical body and not of the soul which is immortal, and therefore only a deluded man is subject to the fear of death.]

5. [The form of Shiva as the patron God of death, or as death personified, as described above was indeed most horrifying and unconventional. So --] Brahma, the creator, was horrified and scared by his own creation when he saw that fearful form of ‘death’. At this, he (death personified) merged himself or entered his own creator, thereby becoming one with him and indistinguishable from him. Therefore, whatever the creator created henceforth had the ‘death factor’ built in it as its integral part which was inseparable from the host.

Then the creator created his seven sons who were conceived in his mind, and were therefore called ‘Manas Putra’ (literally meaning the son of the mind). [This was because at this primary stage of creation, there was no female in whose womb the creator could have implanted his seeds or sperm. The best way to understand this fantastic occurrence is to observe the way a single cell amoeba recreates itself; it

simply splits into two without the need of a partner.] These seven sons had no physical body as they were conceptions of the mind. Hence, when these ‘conceptual sons’ actually revealed themselves, they became the legendary seven great Prajapatis who would become the future guardians of the upcoming creation. (See also Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahmin 2 and 4 which is chapter no. 2 of this anthology.) [5].

[Note—A bit of clarification is needed here. The *Purush* referred above in verse nos.2 and 3 is the macrocosmic gross body of creation, and is therefore called Viraat meaning vast and colossus. The entire universe represented his body; there was nothing that was beyond the outer reaches of this Viraat. This Purush was produced from Hiranyagarbha which was the macrocosmic subtle body of this universe, while the primary entity which was the macrocosmic soul of the universe was called Brahm or Ishwar, the almighty Lord. This is the Vedantic concept. In the Purans, this Purush is called Vishnu. When the Viraat decided to initiate the process of creation, he did severe Tapa or penance which resulted in sweat drops appearing on his forehead. These transformed themselves into Shiva. The creator Brahma emerged from a divine lotus that sprouted from the navel of Vishnu.

The word Purush also means ‘a male’, and it is an apt word to use for the primary Supreme Being of the creation because he represented the vital spark that ignited the cosmic cauldron. The spark that starts the process of reproduction is the male sperm and not the female ova. Without the male sperm, the ova would be useless and impotent. This is why the ‘spark of life’ in a creature is called its ‘consciousness’ which implies something that is not inert and dead. This vital life infusing conscious factor was present in all things that came into being, and it was called the soul or Atma of the creation. The fluid in which this sperm floated was the primordial cosmic gel. Since the yolk of an egg is yellow, the cosmic embryo was also called Hiranyagarbha, or the yellow entity developing in the cosmic womb. Since the creation is an image of what happened at that time, and the individual creature is an image of that Viraat Purush, it is natural that the egg and the embryo of the creature would also resemble their parents.

The proof that Hiranyagarbha had the vital spark of life invested in it is the fact that anything which is not ‘alive’ cannot show any sign of activity, what to speak of such an important activity as dividing into two as narrated in the foregoing verses.

The seven sons of the creator were called Prajapati because they were assigned the task of taking care of the subjects of their father Brahma, the manifested form of the Viraat Purush.]

6. From this Brahma, the creator, emerged the rest of the creation as follows:---From his mouth came into being the Brahmins; from his arms were created the Kshatriyas; from his thighs evolved the Vaishyas; and from his legs were created the Shudras. From his Mana (mind) came into being the Moon; from his eyes evolved the Sun; from the ears arose the external wind (present in the entire cosmos) as well as the Pran (the vital wind in the form of breath that sustains life, as also the other vital winds that control other functions of the body of a creature); and finally from his heart sprouted the rest of creation [6].

[Note—(1) These *four classes* of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance efficiently just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped and equal intensity of pain if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his

sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. All are equal in his eyes. The four classes had specific jobs cut out for them so that the society could function smoothly.

Mouth is used to advice and teach; hence the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exists, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned because they represented the knowledge and wisdom contained in the Vedas. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas were those sons of Brahma who would do the needed by affording protection to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour; merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life, such as production and distribution of food and generation of wealth to provide basic comforts. So he created the Vaishyas to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life on his behalf. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores and the service part, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1/4/11-13, and Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

(2) The *moon* stands for emotions and sentiments of a creature, hence its origin in the Mana which is the epicenter of all emotive thoughts. The *sun* shows light to the world, hence its symbolic origin in the eye of the creator. The *ears* hear sound from all the directions, and sound has its origin in waves which travel in space through the medium of the ether, because sound cannot be either heard or can reach any place without any medium. This medium was called the wind, and since the ears make the presence of sound evident, the *wind or air* has its origin in the ears of Brahma. These ears are physically shaped like a radar or satellite dish antenna because they not only transmit sound waves but also receive them. They are like a 2-way radio receiver. And of course, the world has any relevance and importance if only the *heart* loves it and wishes to be enamoured with it. Once the heart starts to loathe it, or becomes dispassionate towards it, the world becomes irrelevant; therefore the world becomes non-existent as far as the creature is concerned.]

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Canto 2

1. From the creator's Apan wind (the vital wind which is inhaled and moves down in the body, thereby helping in digestion and excretory functions) was created the 'Nishad' community (the boatmen and elephant tamers), the 'Yakshas' (a type of demi-God who guards the treasure of the Gods), the 'Rakshas' (the ones with evil, pervert, sinful and demonic tendencies), and the 'Gandharvas' (celestial musicians; those junior Gods who were lower in the hierarchy of heavenly Gods).

From the bones of the creator were formed the mountains; from his body hairs came into being the members of the botanical kingdom, the various plants and vegetations, including the medicinal herbs; and from his forehead creased with anger evolved the God of wrath, or 'Rudra' [1].

[Note—(1) The *Nishad* community was considered lower than the Shudras. In practical terms this refers to the fact that these people stayed outside the villages and cities, and had little interaction with those people who were regarded as more

educated and cultured. The fishermen and others who took care of animals, such as horses, elephants etc. also belonged to this group. The *Yaksha* was the guard of the God's treasury; here they were assigned the job of protecting the assets that would be generated by the other classes in social hierarchy. The society had all types of people; some of them were wicked and evil. They were the *Rakshas*. And the *Gandharva* was a soul who had aspired to be as exalted as a God but somewhere went astray from his path and became a junior God. All these designations imply that the creation created by the creator had all shades of creatures in it, and all of them were his sons because all were formed from a part of his body. (2) Obviously Brahma got annoyed when his sons started bickering among themselves. So he got angry, and his forehead creased in annoyance. This metamorphosed into Rudra. The word *Rudra* means anger, wrath, vehemence etc. This Rudra was the God of tempest and destruction. He is also identified with Kaal or time and death, because Rudra sparked annihilation when the opportune time for destruction came. The terrible shaft of Rudra brings death and disease to cattle and man, just like plague/pestilence mentioned in the Holy Bible.]

2. That majestic, supreme, almighty One with stupendous glories and immeasurable potentials is an embodiment, a personification of the entire creation made up of the various elements called Bhuts. [See note to verse no. 2] The 'breath' of that Supreme Being consists of, and has manifested itself as, the eternal body of knowledge called the Vedas and their various branches and their offshoots. These Vedas are the Rig, Yajur, Sam and Atharva. Their branches and offshoots are represented by their teaching and principles being interpreted in different ways, leading to various schools of philosophies and doctrines, as well as the different rituals that accompany the performance of religious sacrifices prescribed by them. The study of the Vedas led to the necessity for grammar and the development of etymology of their words as well as the patterns of their poetical composition, called the Chandas, for their systematic study. The Vedas were a huge encyclopedic repository of knowledge, but to put that profound knowledge contained in them to good use created the need to unravel their secrets by studying them in a systematic manner (much like we study any science or learn any art in our modern schools or colleges) by segregating the composite body of knowledge into separate subjects and separate schools, such as astrology and astronomy based on the mathematical formulas encrypted in them, the art and science of jurisprudence, the different philosophical doctrines and their import, and consequentially do more research on them and find out the greater truths enshrined in the magnificent words that were pronounced by Brahma for the good and welfare of his own creation¹. The study and research of the subject matter of the Vedas led to the determination of specific and irrevocable truths, called 'Mimansa'; the evolution of various religious scriptures, called the 'Dharma Shastras', based on these profound truths; detailed narrations and expositions on their principles and philosophies as well as elucidation and discussions of their teachings, their fundamental tenets, their maxims and axioms, called 'Vyakhyan', so that others could understand and follow them. This obviously necessitated the need for having sub-texts which would supplement and compliment the main texts by way of explanatory notes and examples, and set reference models for every sphere of life. Such sub-texts were called 'Up-vyakhyan'.

The above form that the breath of the creator took was of 'intellectual' nature because it pertained to knowledge and its application. But that knowledge would be of any utility only if the creature he produced had 'life'. So the breath of Brahma became the 'breath of life' of all the living creation. [That is why we say 'a man is alive as long as he continues to breathe'. The faculty of speech also depends upon the breath,

because no dead man can speak, and air, which is the wind passing in and out of the body as breath, is the element that enables a man to speak by causing the vocal chords to vibrate in the throat. A person learns anything when he hears about it; a child who has never gone to a formal school also picks up basic knowledge when it hears others speak on any subject, which is how a baby learns to speak its mother tongue even without formal schooling. No subject can be 'taught' without speaking. A man's erudition and wisdom is of no worth if he cannot 'advise and guide' others, but for that he needs to 'speak'. So the profound importance of 'breath' cannot be ignored.] [2].

[Note---¹Like any father, the creator wished to ensure that his progeny is well provided for; they must be given proper guidance and knowledge about their surroundings and must be provided with necessary tools so that they can take care of themselves. That is why he created the Vedas; these texts were meant as an encyclopedia that the creatures of Brahma's creation could refer to as and when they needed, just like we study and acquire necessary arts, skills and knowledge to enable us to stand on our two feet when we grow up and stop depending upon our worldly father for our day to day needs and guidance. After a stage, we leave our colleges and institutes and enter the theatre of life fully prepared to take care of ourselves based on these skills we have learnt in our schools and colleges. So was the case with Brahma and his creation. Knowledge is empowerment; it is a basic requirement if we wish to rise above the level of an ignorant animal. It is knowledge that distinguishes a learned man from a stupid fool. Everything about an educated man would be different from an idiot. No father would like his son to lead a worthless life, so how can the cosmic father have ever neglected this factor while on the job of creation. It is another matter that his sons became Frankenstein monsters in due course!]

3. That supreme entity from which everything else evolved is radiant, splendid and glorious like pure gold. It is self-illuminated with a brilliant divine light in which that Atma (the macrocosmic consciousness of the creation) is subtly present and forms its integral and inseparable part. Besides the Atma, the rest of the world (both the subtle as well as the gross aspects) is also inherently and intrinsically present in the primordial golden cosmic embryo.

That Hiranyagarbha (primordial golden cosmic embryo) divided itself into two—from one part came into being the 'male', and from the other, the 'female'. Becoming the ancestor of all individual forms of life in this creation, he (the macrocosmic male aspect of creation, the Viraat) created all imaginable genera of life forms. Or in other words, with God-like attributes he created the Gods, with attributes associated with sages, seers and saints he created people who would be sages, seers and saints. Similarly, the Yakshas, the Demons and the Gandharvas were also created by him. Next he created the creatures in the lower rung of intellectual development, such as the animals, both the domesticated as well as the wild ones. In this category, some animals became cows, bulls, horses, mares and stallions, while others became donkeys etc.

Some of creatures became 'mothers' (i.e. females) while others became 'fathers' (i.e. males) of the world (i.e. the mortal creation on earth). [This was an ingenious way in which the supreme creator ensured that the process set in motion by him is carried forward unhindered when these couples would procreate themselves without the intervention of the creator any more. Their progeny would populate the entire world.] [3]

[Note—This verse should be compared with verse no.3 of canto 1. There the two parts of the primordial egg formed the earth and the sky; here they metamorphose into a male and a female. In modern terms we can say that verse no.3 of canto 1

relates to the science of physics and geography, while verse 3 here concerns zoology and botany.]

4. [This verse describes the doomsday scenario, which has an uncanny resemblance to the description in the Revelation of the Holy Bible.]

Finally at the time of conclusion, the Supreme Being burns everything and reduces them to ashes (or annihilates completely, without leaving any trace of any form in which the earlier creation existed) in his manifestation or form known as 'Vaishwanar'. [This Vaishwanar is the universal fire element which is present everywhere in a latent form, only to reveal itself when required.]

The earth submerges in the water (of the heaving ocean), the water in the Tej (the energy and heat that is produced at that time eats up the water, or makes the water boil and evaporate), the Tej in the wind (as the heat dissipates and fire is extinguished by the ferocious storm that blows at that time), the wind in the sky (because the wind or air blows in the vast reaches of the sky and sweeps across it, carrying with it the remnants and shreds of creation into the deep bowls of the cosmos). [This is the narration of what is expected at the time of conclusion of the world. This is the end of the physical world at large. Now we shall see what happens to the individual creature at that time.]

The sky collapses in the gross organs of the body (as the creature is unable to breathe fresh cool air because of the reasons explained above, and suffocates to unconsciousness), these organs into their respective sense perceptions (such as for example, the physical organ of the eye ceases to function and that part of the brain that deals with the sense of sight becomes dysfunctional, as a result that though the eye is open, the creature is unable to see; this can be extended to other organs), these perceptions dissolve into the basic elements called Bhuts (which are sky, wind, fire, water and earth), these Bhuts merge into their primary source from where they had emerged at the time of creation, which was Ahankar (literally meaning pride and ego, because it was Ahankar that one can do such and such thing, and then control it and rule over it, and then determine not only one's own future but even the destiny of others that led to the chain reaction that resulted in the creation of spider's web known as the world), the Ahankar element collapses into the 'Mahat' (the supreme, subtle and sublime almighty entity that is the ultimate 'Authority' that governs all that exists). It was the Ahankar of this 'Authority' that it can create such a formidably fantastic and magnificent creation single handedly that led to this magical drama to unfold in the first place. [When this 'authority' realised what a colossus Frankenstein monster it had unleashed, it regretted its decision and decided to call it quits, which resulted in the conclusion.]

This Mahat has some attributes, such as having Ahankar, but it then dissolves into its primary source which has no attributes, and is therefore called 'Abyakta' or the one which cannot be defined, which cannot be seen or perceived or comprehended, which is not manifested or revealed in any way whatsoever.

The Abyakta then dissolves or merges in its own source, the 'Akshar' (literally meaning the word). The latter then vanishes into 'Tama', or goes into oblivion of the eternal darkness present before anything came into existence.

Finally, this Tam dissolves into and becomes one with the supreme transcendental Lord called 'Param Dev'.

When this comes to pass, nothing remains—there is neither truth nor falsehood, or an admixture of the two. (See also verse no. 1 of canto 1.) This is the discipline followed which leads one to the path of Nirvan, or the ultimate

emancipation and salvation*. This is also the path determined by the Vedas; this is their teaching and tenet. [4].

[Note—(1) The process followed here is the reverse of what happened at the time of when the creation unfolded. After the individual creature lost his individuality, it disintegrates into its primary elements. This is at the microcosmic plane of the individual creature. Then we come to the next plane of macrocosm; here the same process occurs, albeit on a larger canvas. All the various Gods represent Ahankar aspect of creation because they think that they are very powerful and have the right of way in the creation. These Gods had taken dwelling in the various organs of the body of a creature when the creation was born. Now they realise their impotency, their impertinence and irrelevance, and virtually ‘die of shame’ at their ignorance-induced haughtiness that had made them think that they were superior to others in this creation. When these Gods collapse and vanish in the same way that the individual creature had been through earlier at the micro plane, then it is said that the Ahankar has collapsed into the Mahat, or that the microcosm has collapsed in the macrosom. This is the Viraat. Next, this Viraat withdraws itself into that entity that is totally devoid of any attributes, the Abyakta. In other words, the manifested form of Vishnu vanishes into his un-manifested form. The grosser macrocosm vanishes into the subtler macrocosm. The scriptures aver that at the beginning there was the ‘word’. This is the Akshar referred above in the foregoing verse. This word was the eternal cosmic sound arising out of vibrations appearing in the cosmic ether when the first signs of some activity in the beginning of creation appeared. Now in the present case when everything is cooling down, this vibration also gradually subsides, and there is absolutely no activity or movement causing any vibration or sound. This is the allusion when it is said that the Akshar vanishes into Tam---all sound falls silent; there is complete stillness of death and the calmness of a dark and still night.

At this stage we find that we have arrived at the point from where the whole enterprise of creation had taken off. That entity which was present before this all started is the entity that remains after all this concludes. And it is the supreme transcendental Brahm, referred to here as Param Dav, or the ultimate Lord. Refer Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, verse nos. 8-16.

(2) Verse no.1 of canto 1 describes the situation at the beginning, while verse no. 4 of canto 2 narrates the end. The intervening verses describe what lies in between. So now the circle becomes complete.

(3) The process described at the time of death has a parallel in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1/5/21 and 3/2/10-13 which is chapter no. 2 of this anthology.

(4) The concept of Vaishwarnar Agni (the all pervading and ubiquitous but latent fire element) is described in detail in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 5/9/1 and its note (chapter no.2).

(5) At the level of an individual creature, when the ‘death pangs’ start, the fire of life present in it begins to die out and the body progressively becomes numb and cold. All its energy and vitality begin to ebb and get transferred to the wind element present in its body as Apaana, Vyan, Udaan, Samaana and Pran. These rise and escape from the body as the creature finally dies when the breath, which is nothing else but the Pran wind, leaves the body. Once the Pran makes its exit from the body, it being the wind element, it immediately disperses in the surrounding space or the sky element and becomes one with it. So now the microcosm has merged with the macrocosm.

At the level of the cosmos, science has established how the world would finally come to an end. In short, all that would remain would be a Black Hole from where even light cannot escape. This alludes to the situation when nothing exists, neither the truth nor the untruth. In the context of this verse, see canto 11, verse no.1 and canto 14, verse no.1. Other major references are (a) Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 3/2/11-13, and 6/2/1-16; (b) Chandogya Upanishad, 5/3/1—5/10/10.

(6)* This verse says that the knowledge contained in this Upanishad leads to liberation and deliverance of the man. Let us examine how and why is he inspired by this knowledge. First, when a wise man observes that even the creation of the cosmic creator Brahma—who is most competent, proficient, innovative, resourceful, mighty, potent and powerful, who is endowed with such stupendous mystical authority that he could do whatever he wanted by his merely wishing for it, who went on and on with his creation creating ever newer varieties and forms of creatures, both animate as well as inanimate, of all shades and hues, belonging to the animal, the plant and heavenly kingdoms, as well as the innumerable number of Gods in his enthusiasm, and also because he wasn't satisfied with what he had created a moment earlier—will come to an end one day, and even that all-powerful Brahma would not be able to save his own creation from decay and disintegration, then what does a humble man—who is like a speck of sand on the beach of the cosmic creation—count; where does he stand? So what is the purpose of causing so much mental misery for what is not possible?

Second, he realises that when Brahma could not be satisfied with either his sons or the rest of creation that they would be able to take care of themselves, as he had to create the Vedas for them which would act as reference encyclopedia for their use, but even these Vedas could not provide them emancipation and salvation in the face of ignorance and delusions which came in their truthful interpretations---say then, how can the humble and inconsequential man ensure that all will be fine with the world for which he is so concerned? Or for that matter, how can he expect these scriptures to provide him with liberation and deliverance if he does not properly understand and implement their advice and guidance.

Third, he learns how the 'Ahankar' factor was the ignition key that propelled even the wise Brahma to think that 'he' is capable of creating something from nothing, and then actually going ahead with this job with this erroneous belief that 'he has created successfully'. Then he proceeded to 'provide for its maintenance, development, progress and general well being', again thinking that 'he is doing it'. But when the time came for conclusion, this Brahma could do nothing to stop it; he could not prevent the disintegration and dissolution of the creation. So a wise man realises that Ahankar is at the root cause for all his self-generated traps in the form of the notion that 'I can do this and that', and then falling into his own snare.

Fourth, the man sees that it was then that Brahma understood that it was some authority much superior and much more powerful than him who was literally remote controlling the whole process, every step of it every moment, and that even Brahma had a father called the Viraat, and the latter also had a father called Hiranyagarbha, who in turn had Ishwar as his father. This Ishwar is the supreme Lord of creation known as Brahm, and not Brahma. This Ishwar is the supreme transcendental cosmic Truth and the absolute Reality in creation. This Brahm has transformed himself as the Atma to make himself readily accessible to each and single creature of his creation, as the Atma resides in the bosom of everyone. This enlightenment makes the man realise that he is indeed Brahm in the form of his pure conscious Atma, and that what he sees around him in this world is exactly similar to what the Brahma, the creator of the physical gross world saw when he thought that he is the creator. And quite similarly, the man has no control over it even as Brahma had no control over his own creation.

All this pondering and thinking sets the man on the twin paths of inquiring what lies behind the false façade of this world and acquiring the truthful knowledge of the reality. He stops pursuing the world because he has come to terms with the fact of its falsehood and the reality that it will end one day nevertheless. This is renunciation and dispassion. Then he begins his search for the 'truthful truth' which can give him real peace and happiness, because that is the goal for which he had been madly engrossed in the world in the first place, seeking peace and happiness in it. This profound awakening is the 'realisation and enlightenment' of the creature. Naturally therefore, he becomes placid and contemplative; all his agitations calm down and he

devolves into his 'true self' which is the pure consciousness known as the Atma. This Atma is a fount of eternal beatitude and felicity. This realisation of the truth is tantamount to breaking free from the bondages of slavery under ignorance and delusions!]

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Canto 3

[This canto describes the salient characteristics of the solemn Atma.]

1. Before the time the first version of the universe came into existence, there was only 'Asat' (i.e. that which was not the truth). That is, it existed in a form that was not visible, non-verifiable, unrecognisable, non-apparent and imperceptible. And therefore it was deemed to be false and non-existent.

Since the world/universe was non-existent at that point of time, the Atma, which is eternal, imperishable and infinite, is not born out of it (because nothing can be born from something that does not exist, and the Atma was there even though the world wasn't there). Therefore, the Atma does not acquire or derive the stupendous authority, glories, majesties, powers and potentials that it inherently and undisputedly possesses because of this world. [That is, the Atma and the world are separate entities. The former has no beginning as it is eternal and imperishable, while the world has a definite beginning and an end. The Atma predates the world; it does not depend upon the world.]

The Atma (soul, pure consciousness) cannot be defined by conventional means by using words. It cannot be touched or felt (since it has no gross body like an idol or even subtle body like the wind respectively). It has no shape, form or contour (because it is attributeless and formless). It is neutral, being an entity marked by equanimity and indifference towards everything. It has no smell that can be detected (i.e. since it is pure, unpolluted, un-adulterated, sublime, eternal and imperishable, no smell or odour, either pleasant or foul, emanates from it). It is free from decay and destruction because it is imperishable and eternal; it is infinite and without a beginning or an end. It needs not to develop or grow any further because it is already grand, majestic and stupendous. It is self contained and satisfied. It is without any birth or beginning (and therefore has no parent or lineage).

Those who have a steady and unwavering intellect having a firm conviction and faith about the glorious and magnificent divine virtues of the Atma and its distinguished existence separate from the rest of the creation, do not have the misfortune of having to suffer from any sorrows, pains, worries, grief, anguish and lamentations of any kind. They never feel distressed, mournful, dismayed, melancholic and disappointed in any circumstance¹. [1].

[Note---¹A person who is realised about the solemnity and sublimity of the 'sacred self' does not suffer because he is not affected by any of the worldly emotions and problems, because for him all these are transient and false like the world itself. Such a person does not yearn for comforts and pleasures because they are also transitory and illusionary. He is not afraid of death because the Atma is eternal and it never dies, and he has realised that he is the Atma and not the body. He is not bothered of any bodily diseases because the body does not belong to him and it is perishable anyway. He is not worried about his sons and family because he is filled with renunciation and detachment. He is contented because he has no desires left unfulfilled. He is not worried about acquiring any more knowledge because all that is to be known is already known to him. It must be remembered here that the Upanishads talk about wholeness and completeness of any thing. Therefore, the realisation

and enlightenment should be complete and wholesome; it should be a holistic approach, and not piecemeal and fractured.]

2. This Atma does not need a Pran (the life infusing and life sustaining vital wind; the breath and other forms of winds present in the body) to remain conscious and alive because it is consciousness itself. It has no mouth, no ears, no speech or voice, no Mana (no emotive thoughts and sentimental behaviours), no Tej (i.e. it has no apparent boisterous spurt of energy and enthusiasm; it has no apparent and discernable signs of life as indicated by the presence of warmth in the body which is an indication of life and vitality), no eyes, no names or epithets, no inheritance, lineage or parentage, no head, no limb, no affections, infatuations or attractions towards or with anything or anybody, no faults, taints, blemishes or shortcomings of any kind. The Atma has no one who can do any good to it or help it in any way (because it does not need anyone for it in the first place, and it is sufficiently self-contained as well as self sustained enough to necessitate it). It is boundless and limitless, it is measureless and without any parameters.

It is profound, majestic and grand with a huge dimension as well as inconsequential, microscopic and diminutive in form. It is gross, dense and heavy as well as light and subtle. It transcends everything and all definitions so much so that it cannot be comprehended and definitively described by the mind-intellect complex.

It is free from any veil or covering that can hide it or conceal its glorious and radiant existence. It cannot be subjected to any discussion, debates and application of logic, rationale and theories. It needs no light to illuminate it because it is self-illuminated. Therefore, it cannot be shown by any external light (because light can show or highlight anything that is in darkness, but how light can show the sun, for example. Atma is not dark, but it is as splendorous as the sun).

It is not dogmatic and narrow minded; it is not a fanatic or a hypocrite. It is devoid of any limitations caused by such arbitrary and hypothetical conceptions as the notions of having an inside and an outside. It is universal, uniform, all pervading and omnipresent; it is all encompassing and nothing is beyond it.

It neither eats anything nor is eaten by anything. [The word eating here has two connotations—harming someone physically as when meat is eaten, and subjugating anyone and usurping his freedom and property. That is, the Atma is very benevolent and merciful as it does not wish to hurt anyone or anything by harming it or tormenting it in any way. At the same time, it cannot be devoured, annihilated, tormented, extinguished, trampled upon, sidelined, eclipsed or subjugated by anyone.] [2].

3. [This verse describes the path to be followed for realisation of the Atma.]

There is a 6-fold path which helps in the realisation of the Atma. It is—(1) truthfulness (of mind, intellect and heart, of deeds and actions, of speech and all other activities); (2) charity (magnanimity and compassion, giving of donations and alms, providing succour and solace); (3) Tapa (sufferance and enduring of hardships, observing austerity and penance); (4) fasting (i.e. observing self restraint of the organs of taste and abstaining from indulgence in food); (5) Bramacharya (celibacy; abstinence and continence; self restraint of the sense organs); and (6) unwavering and sincere renunciation (as well as total and steady dispassion, detachment, indifference to the mundane and the worldly).

Out of these, the three virtues which should always be kept in sight at all times, are---Dam (self restraint of the sense organs, including the mind and heart),

Daan (charity, giving of alms and donations), Daya (showing mercy and compassion to the unfortunate ones). [Refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 1.]

For a person who follows these tenets, the Pran does not abandon or betray him (i.e. it does not get wayward and lead the creature to his downfall; it does not betray the superior Lord called Atma residing in the bosom of the creature by doing anything that would put the Atma to shame by inducing or propelling the creature to get involved in anything that is not behooving for the Atma). Instead, it merges and dissolves in the Atma and becomes one with it. Since the Atma is a microcosmic image of the supreme macrocosmic transcendental authority of the creation called Brahm, the Pran also becomes one with Brahm. [That is, a person who follows these cardinal principles, attains the ultimate liberation that every wise and enlightened person aspires to obtain, and it is to attain the final resting place in the Brahm from where there is no return. See also canto 7, verse no.1.] [3]

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Canto 4

1. This fundamental principle called the Atma is comfortably ensconced and hidden in the center of the red coloured mass of muscles and tissues known as the heart. It resembles a white lotus flower or a white lily which is fully developed.

The heart has ten apertures or holes in which the Pran (the life giving and sustaining vital spark of consciousness) resides [1].

[Note—(1) The word *Pran* has many connotations, depending upon the context in which it is used. It is synonymous for Atma or soul; for the vital winds present in the body, such as for example the breath; for Brahm said to reside in the heart of a creature; for pure consciousness; for energy, vitality, vigour and other signs of life; for that benchmark which determines whether a creature is alive or dead. However, in the present context, the Pran refers to the subtle life sustaining vital winds that flow through the body. These winds perform varied functions, and their presence in the ten apertures or holes of the heart is symbolic of their importance in sustaining life. These winds dissolve in blood and lymph and move through the body via the medium used by these to move from one part of the body to another. Since the blood is the vital fluid that passes through the heart, for the purpose of this verse, we should treat it as the medium in which the Pran dwells. That is why blood is treated as being synonymous with life. Without blood, life of a man is simply not feasible.

Further, it is said elsewhere that the wind and fire elements are subtly and inherently present in the water element, the presence of the former (wind/air) is evident in the form of waves, ripples and movement of the water of a river, ocean or a lake, while the presence of the latter (fire) is proved by the warmth in water that sustains an entire marine or aquatic eco-system with its own vibrant life. Since blood is fluid, it represents water, and therefore inherently possesses the wind as the Pran or the vital life sustaining force inherent in it. And that is why blood ‘flows’. The fire element keeps it ‘warm’.

(2) The *heart* has ten apertures or holes in which life in the form of blood flows. The vital winds are also ten in number. They are called (1) Pran, (2) Apaana, (3) Samaana, (4) Udaana, (5) Vyan, (6) Naaga, (7) Kurma, (8) Krikal, (9) Devdutta, and (10) Dhananjay. (Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, 2/77-87) Since these vital winds move and pervade throughout the body through the network of ducts that carry blood supply in the body, they enter and leave the heart along with the latter through the various arteries, veins and capillaries that have the heart as their pump-house.

(3) Again, since it is the pumping action of the heart that induces the flow of blood, it symbolises the presence of some life, some conscious factor which keeps the

body alive. Indeed, the heart is the only tissue inside the body that shows physical signs of activity by constantly throbbing and pulsating. In fact, when the heart stops beating, the brain, of which a man is so proud and which entitles him to rule over the world, dies instantly. Therefore, the heart is actually the most important tissue or organ in the body, and is hence the seat of the supreme Atma because a king is always seated on the highest seat.

(4) All Upanishads dealing with the philosophy of Yoga describe the heart as 'lotus shaped'. This flower is a symbol of purity, sublimity, holiness and divinity. The wisest creator Brahma, who had pronounced the Vedas at the time of creation, had also been born atop a lotus stemming out of the navel of the Viraat Purush (Vishnu). It is in this lotus the divine Being (Atma) lives as the Lord of the creature.

(5) The above discussion is at the subtle level. At the gross level, we see that the physical heart of a man indeed has ten apertures or holes as follows:--(1) the opening of the superior Vena Cava that brings blood from the upper part of the body into the right auricle; (2) the inferior Vena Cava for blood from the lower parts of the body; (3) the valve between the right auricle and the right ventricle; (4) the Trunks that take blood from the right ventricle to the lungs; (5) and (6) the twin valves that bring blood from the left lobe of the lungs to the left auricle; (7) and (8) the two veins that bring blood from the right lobe of the lungs; (9) the valve that takes blood from the left auricle to the left ventricle; and (10) the main artery that takes blood to other parts of the body from the left ventricle. See also canto 11, verse no.1 of this Upanishad.]

2. The creature (i.e. the Atma, because that is the truthful identity of the creature), during the waking state of consciousness when its Pran Vayu (the life sustaining vital wind which is synonymous with Atma or spirit) is associated with the external world, sees so many rivers and so many different cities.

When that Atma is associated with the Vyan wind, it has a divine sight of those exalted souls who are like Gods, such as for example, sages, seers and saints.

When it is associated with the Apaana wind, it sees Yakshas (a type of demi-God), Rakshasas (demonic souls) and Gandharvas (a class of demi-Gods who are celestial musicians and are famous for creating illusions of grandeur).

When it is associated with the Udaana wind, it observes the world of Devas (Gods), called the Devloka or heaven. It sees there the exalted Gods as well as Jayant (the son of Indra, the king of the Gods and heir apparent of the kingdom of heaven) residing there in all their magnificence.

When the creature's Atma associates itself with the Samaana wind, it observes the treasury of the Gods and their capital city.

Finally, when it associates itself with Vairambha, it is able to see everything—what is known, what is heard, what is witnessed and experienced as well as not witnessed and experienced. It gets empowered to see and observe everything—whether true or false. It acquires a divine, transcendental and mystical sight. [2]

[Note—(1) The five winds mentioned above are also called *Panch Pran*. They are the following:--(a) Pran or breath; (b) Vyan or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body; (c) Apaana or the wind which moves down in the body in the intestines and controls ingestion, digestion and excretion; (d) Udaana or that wind which moves up inside the body and helps to speak and lift the body from a lying posture; (e) Samaana or the wind which helps in circulation and equal distribution of nutrients in the body; (f) Vairambha refers to that state of existence when a man can dispassionately see and clinically analyse the two apparently opposite aspects of anything, the so-called two sides of a coin. This entails observing both the obvious and truthful as well as that is misleading and false. This ability of the Atma comes when the mind is totally unbiased, free from any extraneous considerations, and free from being torn between two situations, unable to decide what is true in the absence

of correct knowledge. See also Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no.31-32 which is chapter no.2 of this anthology.

There is a lot of symbolism here. The 'Pran' breathes life into a creature; this creature then interacts with the outside world and sees its colourful canvas, symbolised by the rivers and cities. The 'Vyan' makes the mind stable and steadfast; it helps overcome fickleness, and it therefore inspires a creature to seek the company of noble souls such as sages and saints. The 'Apan' passes through the anus, the lowly part where all the excretory gross matters which are of no use of the body accumulate in the form of stool; it is therefore the wind that is treated as being the most lowly amongst all the five winds. That is why when it dominates the creature, he symbolically sees those entities which are considered lowly in the hierarchy of spiritual development, such as the Demons and the Gandharvas. The 'Udaan' lifts a man from his lying down position, which is a symbol of his spiritual upliftment. It helps to buoy the mind and prevent it from sinking into the abyss of ignorance and delusions by making it steady and resolute. Therefore, he is able to rise above the mundane and subtly see those who are better than him and have found a place in the heavens; his sight is always focused on the higher and nobler values in creation so that one day he can also become a resident of heaven, like those Gods. The 'Samaan' wind takes care of the whole body like a parent, without being favourable to any particular part, and being non-partisan, unbiased, equanimous and gracious in its dealings with all the corners of the body. It therefore symbolically endows success in all enterprises in which the creature participates. This helps all round welfare and well being, symbolised by being able to have access to the treasury of the Gods. This wealth is heavenly, and worldly interpretation of treasury as being equivalent to money is not the criterion here. Finally we have 'Vairambha'; the wind which bestows mystical powers that enables a man to see what an ordinary eye cannot.]

3. The heart has ten into ten (i.e. a hundred) veins. Each has seventy two thousand branches or capillaries. In this way, there are numerous ducts of the body in which the Pran or the Atma (both being synonymous with each other) roams when the man is sleeping and dreaming. Then, in his dreams, he virtually speaks in and sees this world in the other world (i.e. his sub-conscious recollects the scenes and events of the world in which the man had lived while awake and then conjures up an imaginary world of its own called the world of dreams which draws upon the man's experiences of the world known to him while he was awake). He then thinks that he knows everything, i.e. that he is very wise and knowledgeable.

While the Atma is in this state of existence, called the dreaming state of consciousness, it is called 'Samprasad' (meaning that it uniformly spreads itself in all the veins and capillaries as well as the nerves of the body; it disperses itself uniformly in all the ducts of the body. It literally 'resides uniformly at all places at the same time'). In such a situation, the Atma (the pure conscious), in association with the Pran (the vital wind which infuses physical life in the body and sustains it), help the latter to protect the body. Or in other words, while a man sleeps, the Atma joins hands with Pran and prevents the latter from either escaping from the body or causing any harm to the body. It also ensures that all the vital signs of life and actions of the various organs and tissues of the body go on unhindered and uninterrupted.

The ducts (i.e. veins) in the body have fluids of different shades of colours flowing in them—such as green, blue, yellow, red and white. [These refer to the mucous, blood, bile, lymph, various hormones and enzymes and other such chemicals that are present inside the body] [3]

[Note—(1) The concept of the Atma or Pran living in the numerous *Naadis* or ducts of the body while the man sleeps has been elaborately dealt with in Brihad

Aranayaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no.16-20, and Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no.9-30. This Upanishad is chapter 2 of this anthology.

(2) The various Prans, or the life sustaining vital winds present inside the body, and the fact that there are indeed 72 thousand ducts (veins and nerves) called 'Naadis' has been elaborately dealt with in the following other Upahishads—Jabal Darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.6-47, and Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, verse no.75-88.

(3) There are four states of consciousness in which a creature exists. These have been discussed in canto 9 of this Upanishad. Separate appendices of this anthology explains these states in detail and in a simple language along with all other relevant concepts such as the Naadis]

4. The eclectic, sublime and holy Divinity present in the heart resembles a white lotus or a lily flower which has attained full bloom. The fibers of this divine lotus/lily are so fine and micro-thin that they resemble a hair follicle split into a thousandth part. These fibers of the divine lotus/lily are the symbolic counterparts of the numerous capillaries of the heart called 'Hita'. The supreme, divine, ethereal, sublime, subtle and fundamental principle called the Atma or soul (which is pure consciousness) is present in the subtle space or sky present in the heart. This space or sky is called the 'Hridya Akash'¹. The core or the central part or the focal point of this space, where the essential element called the Atma is present, is called the 'great core or the treasury or the citadel'. [The idea expressed here is that the heart is the most essential tissue or organ of the body without which life is just not possible in a man. But the 'heart of this heart' is the Atma, as it were. The physical heart functions and keeps the body alive because the subtle Atma is at the core of it and empowers it from well within its very core to carry out its assigned function, which is to keep the body alive. The Atma is like the electric that drives the motor of life.]

When the creature is in deep sleep state of existence (which is beyond the dreaming state, and is the 3rd state of consciousness), he does not see any dream nor has any hopes, expectations, aspirations and desires. In that state, there is no concept of the existence of any God or any abode of a God, there is no fire sacrifice or any other religious rites or sacraments that needed to be done. In that neutral state of existence, the creature is neither a father nor a mother, it is neither a friend nor a kith or kin of anybody; he is neither a thief nor a killer of Brahmin. The creature in that mysterious and esoteric state of existence is synonymous with the magnificent and stupendous entity called the Atma, which is the pure self, the pure consciousness, the immaculate soul, the ethereal spirit.

It (the Atma with which the creature is identified in this state) is an embodiment of 'Tej' (natural radiance, splendour, energy, illumination, vitality, vigour and glory). It is submerged in an ocean of Amrit; that is, it is soaked and surrounded from all sides with an immense surge of eternal bliss, happiness and peace. [Amrit is the ambrosia drunk by the Gods which bestows eternity and bliss to them.]

Outside this ocean is the land mass consisting of a dense forest. The Atma, when it wakes up from sleep, rushes towards the world through the path passing through this forest. This is what those who are most exalted, wise and realised, and are like emperors in the spiritual field, have expounded and preached. [4]

[Note—(a) ¹There are ten *subtle skies* in metaphysics. They are the following:--(1) Ghataakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a shrine; (3) Hridyakash—the subtle space inside the heart, the space referred to in this verse; (4) Akash—the blank space above the earth; the Firmament; (5) Suryakash—the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Parakash—the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to

burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash—the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; (8) Parmakash—the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and enclose everything that exists, including all the other skies; (9) Tatwakash—the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; and (10) Antariksha—the space where the stars are present.

(b) Another interpretation of the word *Akash* in metaphysics is the following:-- the space surrounding the five sheaths or 'Koshas' present in the body of a creature. These are determined as follows—(1) Food sheath called 'Anna Maye Kosh', (2) Vital Air sheath called 'Pran Maye Kosh', (3) Mental sheath called 'Mano Maye Kosh', (4) Intellect sheath called 'Vigyan Maye Kosh', and (5) Bliss sheath called 'Anand Maye Kosh'.

(c) According to Mandal Brahmino-panishad, canto 4, section 1, verse no.1-4 (chapter 10 of this book), there are five following skies—(1) Akash—that sky which is dark and neutral from within and without; (2) Parakash—that sky which has hell-like fire burning in it from within and without; (3) Mahakash—that sky which has divine illumination from within and without; (4) Suryakash—that sky which is radiant and splendid like the sun from within and without; and (5) Parmakash—that space which is full of beatitude and felicity, and is all encompassing. The skies have also been described in Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5-8 (chapter 9 of this book).

(d) The scene conceptualized here can be understood by a worldly simple example. The Atma is like an oyster which withdraws itself in its shell (Kosh) when the man sleeps. Like an octopus, it withdraws its tentacles representing the various sense organs of the body which had been spreading in all directions when the man was awake. With its limbs withdrawn, the octopus lies peacefully ensconced somewhere in the bottom of the ocean where it is undisturbed and un-tormented. It is only when it spreads out its tentacles that it begins to move and feel the world around it. Much like an amphibious creature, when the Atma wakes up, it reaches the shore of the ocean of bliss, and comes in contact with land—it begins to see the world outside the ocean of complete bliss where it had been lying till now. This external world looks very exciting, charming and enticing to it, but to reach the pleasures offered by this world, it has to negotiate the formidable forest. But so alluring is the sight of the world that the creature decides to take the risk of entering the forest, fully confident that it would retrace its steps when it so desires. Once landed and once inside the dense forest, it loses its way and is forced to adjust itself in its new habitat. It gradually begins to treat the world as its home. It crawls through the forest on a path visible to it, and in due course of time reaches the other end of the forest. Then it sees a complete new world, and its natural habitat of the blissful ocean is no where in sight. Being a creature of the water and not of the land, it gets tormented and suffers a lot. Some householder picks it up and it belongs to this household now. It meets some other unfortunate creature there and begets children and raises a family. The disruption of the 'placenta' is complete! Now, if luck favours it, the creature meets another one of its kind who reminds it of its original home. It is then the creature becomes homesick and then tries to sneak away from its life of slavery. If it's sincere, it tries to find out a way out of his predicament. Some wise one then advises and shows the creature the way back to the ocean. If the creature is intelligent and wise, he

chucks everything and returns home to his original habitat in the ocean of bliss and tranquility. These postulates are further elaborated in canto 5 below.]

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Canto 5

[This canto describes how the Atma becomes active through the medium of the various sense organs collectively called the gross body of the creature, and the mind-intellect complex called its subtle body. In this context, those aspects that relate directly with the Atma are called 'Adhyatma', those which relate to the gross world are called 'Adhibhut', and those which relate to the subtle powers and forces operating in Nature are called 'Adhidaivat'. Both the microcosm (Atma) and the macrocosm (heavenly Gods) are included in these three words mentioned hereinabove. See also canto 7.]

1. The venerable Atma subtly resides in the Naadis (nerves and veins and other ducts present in the body) as the conscious factor, the vitality, energy and life that flows through these ducts and sustains life in the body of a creature. The network of Naadis is the main path or medium for the Atma to do what it wants to do. That is, the Atma interacts with the world through the body by keeping it alive and enabling the various organs to function properly, but the essential means to achieve this is the proper functioning of the various nerves and veins.

[Now let us take the example of the eye--] The 'eye' is like the venerable Atma; it is visible manifestation of the Atma (because the eye has consciousness and is the 'seer' of the world). Therefore it is called 'Adhyatma'. That object (the external, gross, visible world) that the eye sees is called 'Adhibhut' (because it essentially consists of the various 'bhuts', or elements such as earth, water, fire, wind and sky in different forms and shapes). The subtle, supreme, sublime and almighty authority that empowers the eye to see (i.e. the faculty of sight; the special and exclusive ability of the eye to see something, an ability that other organs do not have) is like the Sun God (Aditya) which lights up the world to 'enable' the eye to see the latter. [That is why we cannot see in the dark] Therefore, this Aditya is called 'Adhidaivat'. Now therefore, that 'divine eye' (not the physical eye, but the eye representing the 'complete conscious factor' enabling the creature to see anything, and without which, no matter how hard the creature tries, it cannot see) that subtly, imperceptibly but inherently lives in all the organs of the body (making them alive, active and conscious), the objects of the world (making them look real, attractive and worth interacting with, for no one would like to deal with anything that is unattractive and like it were dead), the Aditya (the Sun, making it shine), the Naadis (making them energized with vibrant and active life, which in turn makes the body alive), the Pran (the vital winds, enabling them to display their stupendous potentials by infusing and sustaining life in an otherwise gross and inane dead body), Vigyan (the stupendous potentials of the intellect and mind acquired by thorough and rational knowledge and learning of anything, making such knowledge and skills so potential, effective and powerful, so useful and sought after by the creature, for no one wants to pursue worthless knowledge and acquire useless skills;), Anand (bliss and happiness; beatitude and felicity), the Hridayakash (the Atma itself and its immediate surroundings, here referring to the heart, because the Atma lives in the subtle space of the heart—see verse no.4 of canto 4 above), and the rest of the body—is called pure consciousness, or the Atma. It is the Godhead personified.

Verily, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [1]

[Note—To be specific, the nerve that especially relates to the eye is the optical nerve that enables the creature to see by the medium of the eye. But in a more general way, the word ‘Naadi’ refers to the uncountable, micro-fine network of nerves in the body which is like the wiring circuit of an electronic gadget through which electric impulses pass constantly but imperceptibly. The entire machine will fail to function even if one single wire of the complex circuitry snaps or short-circuits. In this analogy, the Naadis are the wires through which the electric impulse of consciousness passes, and the electric itself is the Atma or pure consciousness which not only activates the machine but keeps it running. Incidentally, the very purpose of Yoga, or meditation, is to keep these Naadis in fine fettle.]

2 [The same logic of the eye being a manifestation of the supreme and venerable Atma is now being extended to the ears--] Similarly, the organ of the ‘ear’ is like the venerable Atma. It is a manifestation of the Atma, and is therefore called ‘Adhyatma’ (i.e. that which pertains to the Atma as a divine entity). The words or sound that is the object of hearing by the ears are called the ‘Adhibhut’ (because the sound and the words have their origin and existence in the mortal terrestrial world made up of the elementary elements of creation called the ‘Bhuts’). The various directions are called ‘Adhidaivat’ as the basic sounds that form the words, or the alphabets that make up the word, are deemed to be the root or seed words for the different patron Gods of the creation who reside in the various directions¹.

The basis of all these is the network of Naadis (ducts called nerves that carry the various sense perceptions and electric impulses that activate each and every organ of the body, as well as the veins and capillaries that carry blood and other vital fluids to the different corners of the body) which keeps the body alive and enables it to hear sound and the word. [See note to verse no.1 above.]

The vital life or conscious factor present in the ear which enables it to hear, the energy of the sound waves which transforms the sound into meaningful words, the directions which are impregnated with the sound energy, the nerves through which a man keeps conscious and hears or perceives any sound (here referring, *inter alia*, to the auditory nerve), the Pran which keeps him alive, the Vigyan (sound and rational knowledge that is applicable in practice; the intellect and discrimination faculty of the mind) that enables the man to make sense of the words heard, the satisfaction and joy one gets when one comes to realise the great blessing of hearing that he possesses (as compared to a deaf man denied this privilege), the Hridayakash (the subtle Atma residing in the heart) that feels gladdened and exhilarated when one hears anything pleasant and comforting, and the pure consciousness which flows (much like the electric current) inside the whole body---verily, that indeed is the Atma.

Surely, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [2]

[Note--¹The various *Gods* represent the various forces of Nature in their best and purest form, untainted and uninfluenced by the negative forces. Therefore, they are considered superior to everything else in creation. Even as only competent, honest, trustworthy, truthful and expert people are put in charge of any department in today's world, the creator entrusted these forces, in their sublime and ethereal form, to be in charge of his creation. According to the metaphysical concept of sound, the entire creation is represented by the divine word OM, whose three letters A, U and M stand for creation, development and conclusion respectively. The letters are not lifeless alphabets, but they have divine energy inherently but latently present in them, making them potent and powerful instruments of the creator. That is why repetition of the Mantras have so great effects. Since sound emanates from any one of the directions of the earth, it is said here that the constituent parts of the words represent the 'Godly' aspect of creation, called 'Adhidaivat' or that which pertains to the Gods.

The various directions and their patron Gods have been described in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 3/1/9, 3/9/21-24 (chapter no.2 of this anthology).

According to the Purans, the twelve directions and their patron Gods are the following—(1) East—Indra; (2) South East—Fire God; (3) South—Yam God, the God of death and final judgment; (4) South West—Nairiti; (5) West—Varun, the Water God; (6) North West—Vayu, the Wind God; (7) North—Kuber, the God of treasure and wealth; (8) North East—Ishan, Lord Shiva; (9) Zenith—Brahma, the creator; (10) Nadir—Prithivi or earth; (11) Sun; and (12) Moon.]

3. The rationale that was applied to the eye and ear can be applied to the 'nose' also. Hence, the subtle imperceptible power of the nose to smell, the conscious factor inherently present in it that enables the nose to smell, is called 'Adhyatma' (because it relates directly to the Atma that empowers the nose). The objects of the world that it smells are called 'Adhibhut' (because smell emanates from gross things of the world consisting of the elements called Bhuts). The earth, which harbours everything dead or alive and inherently bears the virtue of smell which is an integral part of everything related to earth, is the 'Adhidaivat'. [This fact can be verified by bringing a clod of earth near the nostril; it emanates a typical 'earthy smell or fragrance'. All pots made from earth lend their typical earthy smell and flavour to anything kept in them, as is evident from water kept in such pots or pitchers. Houses made of mud also effuse a distinct sweet earthy fragrance from their walls. There is no smell in the sky, but anything with the 'earth element' present in it would emanate a smell.]

The Naadi is the channel through which the nose is empowered to smell and the body to react to that smell. [The olfactory nerves related to the perception of smell are present in the nose and not in, say, the eye or the ear. The Atma manifests its magical and mystical ability to smell through the olfactory nerve especially empowered for this purpose. The veins and capillaries that carry blood and other nutrients to the nose to keep it alive and functioning in prime shape also subtly have the life factor called the Atma or consciousness present inherently in them. Without the Atma being intrinsically present in these ducts, the nose would lose its importance and significance.]

The vital factor or conscious life which is present in the nose enabling it to smell, that empowers the objects to emit a smell, that enables the earth to bear everything that emits smell or produces it, that enables the Naadis to perform their functions properly, that allows and authorises the Pran to let the nose smell (because it is the Pran, or the breath that keeps a man alive; it is the Pran moving in and out of the nose that enables the nose to breathe in the first place), that enables the intellect to perceive or decipher a particular external stimuli as 'smell' (and not as something else, or some other perception such as sight or sound), that enables the mind and the

heart to feel happy to smell pleasant things and feel contented at being able to do so (as compared to a man who has lost the sense of smell due to some disease, for example), that provides joy and bliss to the Atma resident in the heart when the creature feels exhilarated and ecstatic on smelling something sweet, fragrant and divine to smell, and that which moves and pulsates throughout the body as its vital life and consciousness---verily, that venerable and exalted entity is indeed the Atma.

Verily, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [3]

4. In a similar fashion, the conscious factor inherently present in the 'tongue' which enables it to perform its special function to taste (and speak) is called the 'Adhyatma'. The food that it tastes is called 'Adhibhut' (because food obviously consists of gross things, such as plants and animals, and food is needed by the gross body to survive; the Atma does not need any form of gross food whatsoever). The Water God called Varun is the 'Adhidaivat' because no food tastes any good unless the taste buds are activated in the tongue, and chemicals that do this and help the food to be of any good for the body, need water to function. Food needs water to grow and to be of any use to the man, as water is needed to wash it, to cook it, to digest it, to eliminate it, etc. The tongue is the only organ empowered to taste food and initiate the vital function of digestion by secreting saliva which contains digestive enzymes dissolved in water. No other part of the body is empowered with this unique function.

The Naadi is the passage or duct through which the tongue carries out its function to taste and begin the process of digestion (and for that matter, speak), which enables the blood and other chemicals and enzymes to reach the tongue, which carries to the brain the sense of taste perceived by the tongue, and which enables the mind, heart and body to react to that food and its virtues, such as being attracted to any food or feeling repulsive to any other, to be energized and nourished by the food, to feel contented and cheerful by tasting delicious food, and feeling disgusted at stale and tasteless food.

The consciousness empowering authority that enables and empowers the tongue to taste, that enables the food to remain tasty, that is the vital inherent quality present in the water that enables it to convert the gross form of food into its basic ingredients (or break it into its organic and inorganic form that is recognised by the biochemistry of the body) so that the food becomes useful and tasty, that empowers and activates the Naadis to enable the man to benefit from the food and enjoy its taste (and derive nutrition from it), that inspires the Pran to make the man enjoy the food (because only a man in good health and mind can enjoy and derive benefit from the food eaten, as is evident from the fact that a sick man does not enjoy food), that empowers the mind to perceive the sense called taste and distinguish it from other senses or perceptions, that enables a person to enjoy the taste of food and feel contented in heart where the Atma resides, and that provides the entire body the thrill of tasty food tasted by the tongue--verily, that venerable and exalted entity is indeed the Atma.

Surely, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without

sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [4]

5. Similarly, the conscious factor present in the organ of the 'skin' which enables the skin to carry on its function is known as 'Adhyatma'. Anything in the world worth touching or feeling by the skin is called 'Adhibhut' (because the skin can touch only those things that are basically gross in form, such as a solid or a liquid, and such things belong to the world consisting of the Bhuts or the elements from which all things on this earth are made). The Vayu, or the air/wind element, is called 'Adhidaivat' (because the air is so subtle an element that the skin can feel it but cannot catch hold of it; the wind, as a soft breeze, gives a sense of comfort and joy when it touches the skin and gently massages it; the air in the form of the breath is the life sustaining element amongst the five elements in creation, and it is the patron God, as it were, of the perception of touch. Further, even if we do not make any conscious attempt to touch the wind or the air, they still touch us at all times even though we may not be aware of this fact).

The Naadis keep the skin sensitive and active by bringing blood supply to it and taking the stimuli of touch received by the skin to the brain. Without the Naadis, the skin would not be able to carry out its function in the proper way.

Therefore, the skin, the things that give a sensation of touch or those that are worthy of being touched, the wind or air which gently massages the skin, the Naadis that aid the skin to carry on its function and inject life into it, the Pran (vital wind which keeps the man alive, for a dead man's skin is akin to the sac that holds garbage), the brain that feels the sensation of touch and lends the skin its importance, the pleasant and exhilarating feeling that is derived when one experiences the sense of gentle touch, as is evident when a man whose body had become numb due to some reason begins to 'feel' things once again, the heart (where the Atma resides) which enjoys such feelings of bliss and contentedness, the thrill that the sensation of touch causes in the body---verily, that indeed is the venerable Atma.

Verily, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [5]

6. Similarly, the Mana (the thoughts and emotions of the man; the mind-intellect-heart complex) of a creature is related to the Atma, hence it is called 'Adhyatma'. [The Atma has no physical body of its own; it acts through the Mana. The Mana controls all the actions of the body of a man. A man does good things or bad things depending upon the instructions that the mind-intellect-heart complex issues to it. It is the sovereign of the man's behaviour even as the Atma is sovereign of the Mana itself. The conscious factor that controls the Mana is the Atma, because a man without life or Atma will have no Mana, as a dead person has no mind or heart.]

The objects of all such emotions and thoughts in the world are called 'Adhibhut' (because they pertain to the gross world, and only a 'Jiva', or a living creature called Bhut, is able to think and have emotions).

The patron God of the Mana, the Moon, is the 'Adhidaivat' (because the Moon is said to exercise control over the Mana of a man, as is evident when one becomes exceptionally sentimental under the influence of the Moon).

All these entities have their existence only because of the Naadis (ducts such as veins and nerves) present in the body through which consciousness and sensations flow, through which all the sensations and feelings, all emotions and thoughts are brought into effect. Had it not been for the Naadis, the mind, the intellect and the heart would not have functioned, what to talk about their effects on the creature. The veins carry blood, nutrients and chemicals to these subtle organs; the nerves carry the impulse to and fro from them to the other parts of the body, enabling the latter to carry out the instructions of the Mana.

So, that which activates, empowers and regulates the all powerful entity called Mana, that which makes the objects of the world worthy of thought and paying attention to and evoking emotions and igniting sentiments, that which is even the subtle life and conscious factor of the Moon God, empowering him to be so powerful and mighty, that which flows through the Naadis as the spark of life and consciousness, that which empowers the Pran (the vital wind forces of life) to breathe 'life' into the otherwise lifeless gross creature, that which makes the creature blissful and happy and feel contented by generating pleasant thoughts and evoking auspicious emotions in his heart, and that which pervades and flows throughout the body as its consciousness and life---verily, that is indeed the venerable Atma.

Surely, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless.[6].

7. Likewise, the conscious and enlightening factor that enables the 'Buddhi' (intellect and discriminatory faculty; reasoning and rationality) of a man to acquire its stupendous potentials and powers, is called the 'Adhyatma'. All the objects that are the subject matter of intellect and worthy of knowing and contemplating about are 'Adhibhut', while Brahma, the creator, is their 'Adhidaiv' or the patron God (because he is the God who pronounced the Vedas at the time of creation, and these Vedas are repository of all knowledge that exist in this creation).

The Naadis (ducts such as veins and nerves) are the roots from which all gained their respective importance and significance, because it is the Naadis through which life and consciousness flows. [The veins take blood to the brain and keeps it active and nourished, the nerves obviously play an all-important role in the functioning of the brain and therefore of the intellect. Their importance in the body cannot be underestimated or over emphasised at any cost.]

Hence, that which activates, empowers and regulates the intellect, that which entitles the objects of intelligent thought and application of rationality to be worthy of such thoughts and rationality, that which entitles the subjects of learning and deep ponderings to be of value, that which has empowered even the creator Brahma, that which flows as life and consciousness in the Naadis, that which empowers the Pran to inject life and intelligence into an otherwise lifeless and dud creature, that which lives inherently in knowledge and makes it so worthy, effective, powerful and sought after, that which provides happiness, contentedness and bliss on acquisition of the Buddhi (as is evident when we see a wise man remaining calm and peaceful when he applies his intelligent mind to any given situation, as opposed to a man who easily becomes emotional and upset due to ignorance and lack of reasoning), that which lives in the realm of the heart and helps it coordinate with the intellect (i.e. synchronise the

emotions of the heart with the intelligent and rationalism of the brain), and that which pervades throughout the body as its life and consciousness---verily, that is indeed the venerable Atma.

Verily, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [7].

8. In the same vein, 'Ahankar' (the traits defined as ego, pride, haughtiness and arrogance) is akin to 'Adhyatma' (because only a living creature, thereby implying the presence of Atma, who has some special qualities and powers can think of being proud and be haughty, it is only a living person who can have any ego, and displaying arrogance needs the proportionate support of strength of arms and authority to make it tenable and effective. These traits, though negative, are indicative of power, authority and potentials present in the person who displays them, and Atma is the only entity that empowers a creature do anything). Those objects of the world that incite Ahankar (or make a man feel proud and arrogant about, incite ego and haughtiness in him) are akin to 'Adhibhut' (because only gross things of the world can lead a man to have negative traits, for spiritual possessions make a man humble and pious instead of being haughty and arrogant, or have any kind of false ego and pride). The patron God of Ahankar is Rudra (the angry form of Lord Shiva, because Ahankar excites anger and wrathfulness, a desire to crush anything that stands in the way of one exercising superiority over others and causing hindrance in achieving anything that Ahankar pushes a man to acquire or achieve, and then retain his acquisition; he will become annoyed and angry if anyone questions his behaviour). Therefore he is 'Adhidaivat'.

As in previous cases, these have any relevance only till the time the Naadis (the various nerves and veins of the body) are active (for a dead man does not have any Ahankar whatsoever).

Therefore, that which activates, empowers and regulates these negative traits called Ahankar in a man, that which creates any notion of worthiness in an object so that its possession arouses a sense of Ahankar in a man, that which empowers the angry form of Rudra (Lord Shiva) to be able to effectively implement his anger and wrath, or be angry and wrathful in the first place, that which flows as consciousness and life through the various Naadis, that which inspires the Pran to propel a man with sufficient energy, courage and strength to be proud, have ego, be arrogant and haughty, that which makes a man feel happy and enjoy his Ahankar (instead of feeling guilty and ashamed of it), that which lives in the space of the heart as Ahankar (because the heart is more pliable to such emotions as compared to the intellect-mind complex), and that which pervades throughout the body as its life and consciousness--verily, that is indeed the venerable Atma.

Surely, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [8].

[Note—Lord *Shiva* has eleven forms, and one of them is 'Rudra', which literally means anger, wrath and vehemence. The Lord is considered to be the most

enlightened of the Trinity Gods, and is therefore called *Maheshwar*. He always remains in a meditative posture, always contemplating and meditating on the supreme Soul and the Truth. But still he shows anger and mercilessness, because one of his tasks is to punish the evil and sinful ones by ruthlessly slaying them in order to protect the good and righteous souls in the creation. Further, when his meditation and peace is disturbed he also becomes angry. He remains aloof and disinterested in the world, because he is very wise and enlightened, and he stays in the form of an ascetic. Ordinary people think that he is proud, arrogant and haughty because he does not give a damn to worldly formalities and niceties of behaviour. Shiva's failure to conform to set norms of proper and sane conduct makes him look most odd God. The word 'Rudra' is used as a metaphor for anger, wrath, vehemence and cussedness. Here the word Rudra is used in its literal sense of anger, wrathfulness and cussedness because a man who has Ahankar usually shows these characters. Lord Shiva has no Ahankar in him, so there is no question of his being implicated with Ahankar. A word has many meanings, and wrong deductions or incorrect interpretations would turn the text on its head.]

9. As an extension of the logic presented in verse no.7 above, the active, conscious and enlightening factor that enables the 'Chitta' (the sub-conscious mind; the faculty of reasoning, memory, thought, intelligence, concentration and focus) of a man to acquire its stupendous potentials and powers, is the 'Adhyatma' (because the Atma is the only authority that can empower a man to display these virtues).

The objects that are the subject matter of attention by the sub-conscious, are called 'Adhibhut' (because the Atma considered them to be worthy of paying any attention and keeping them in the data bank of the memory, as compared to so many other inputs or stimuli that the Atma just forgets and discards as worthless).

The supreme, omniscient, almighty Authority that controls the Chitta and its function is called 'Kshetranya', and it is also called the 'Adhidaivat'. [The word 'Kshetranya' literally refers to an authority that exercises full sway over the domain under its control, and it knows about everything which falls within its realm or area of control and authority. Since the Atma is that authority in this case, it is referred to as Kshetranya. Again, since it is the exclusive Lord of its realm and there is no superior authority to it, it is also Adhidaivat.]

The Naadis (veins and nerves) are at the center of all this; they are the ducts through which the Chitta derives its strength and potentials (because, obviously, Chitta is the function of the mind, and without the help of the nerves and veins neither the mind nor the body can survive to display the powers of the Chitta, or the importance and significance of Chitta).

So, that which activates, empowers and regulates the Chitta, that which makes the objects of the world worthy of contemplation and deep thought of the mind and focus of its faculty of reasoning, memory and sub-conscious, that which is the supreme, omniscient Authority that governs the Chitta, that which flows through the Naadis as the vital life and consciousness, that which empowers the Pran to breathe life into the man and provide him with the energy, stamina, strength, ability and vitality to use his Chitta effectively, that which lends supremacy to knowledge or any other information which entitles it to be worthy of acquisition by the Chitta and stored in the mind, that which inspires a man to feel exhilarated, contented and happy at this enlightenment and acquisition of knowledge by the Chitta, that which lives in the space of the heart and coordinates its activities with the Chitta besides keeping it activated and throbbing, and that which pervades uniformly throughout the body as its life, vitality and consciousness---verily, that is indeed the venerable Atma.

Verily, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [9].

10. The active, conscious factor which enables the 'Vaak', or the faculty of speech, to acquire its stupendous and glorious potentials, is called 'Adhyatma', because the Atma reveals itself, its erudition and wisdom, its majestic powers and potentials through the medium of speech of a man. It is the speech that enables the Atma to express its desires, its intentions, and issue its instructions to the external world.

The subjects talked about and the objects of speech are called 'Adhibhut' (because they pertain to the world consisting of the elements called Bhuts, and also because the person to whom a man speaks is also a mortal creature made up of the five elements called Panch Bhuts).

The Fire God, who symbolically resides in the mouth of a man, is the patron God of speech; hence he is called the 'Adhidaivat'.

The Naadis (veins and nerves) of the body are central to the whole setup, because it is the vital consciousness and life flowing through the various nerves and veins of the body that empowers and enables the man to speak. (The veins supply blood and nutrients to the organs concerned with speaking as well as to the brain that controls the faculty of speech; the nerves concerned with the faculty of speech act in coordination with the brain to enable a man to speak coherently and cogently. These two—the veins and the nerves—work with each other and in close coordination so that a man can speak at all.)

Therefore, that which activates, empowers and regulates the speech and empowers a man to speak, that which gives credence, importance and weight to what is spoken, that which lends glory, majesty, importance, powers, authority and strength to the Fire God, and in turn to the speech itself, that which flows through the Naadis as their vitality, the current of life and consciousness, that which empowers the vital Pran (breath and other vital life sustaining winds) to empower the man to speak by providing him with sufficient energy, strength and stamina, that which infuses and lightens up his speech with knowledge, wisdom and erudition, that which creates exhilaration, satisfaction and joy derived from a good spoken word, that which inspires the heart from inside its core to join the speech and lend it its emotional support to make it vibrant, enchanting, articulate, effective and forceful, and that which pervades throughout the body and allows it to speak and enjoy a good spoken word as well as to derive happiness from it---that verily is the venerable Atma.

Surely, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless.[10]

11. The two hands are the organs through which the Atma does all the deeds and takes any action in the world; hence they are called 'Adhyatma' (because the Atma manifests itself, inter alia, by enabling the hands to hold and accept anything; it is the

consciousness present in the body that provides life, energy and strength to the hands and make them exhibit their skills).

Things that are worthy of being accepted and held by the hands are called 'Adhibhut' (because the hands can hold things that have a physical form, are gross, solid and dense enough to be held by it; since all things in this world are made up of the Bhuts, or the elements, hence the objects held by the hand are one or the other forms of these Bhuts).

And Indra, the king of Gods, is also the patron God of the hands, and therefore he is called 'Adhidaivat'. [The Gods represent the subtle, sublime and supreme forces of Nature that regulates the functions of the different parts of the body. Each part has a patron God. The hands are the most important organ because a man can do anything with them; hands enable him to do righteous, virtuous and noble deeds that can ensure his emancipation and salvation. It is the hand by which he worships Gods; it is the hand by which he does sacrifices and other religious duties. Though it is true that he commits horrible deeds with it too, but that is out of his ignorance and stupidity, and does not deprive the hands of their exalted stature of being an instrument for attaining liberation and deliverance. The fact that the patron God of the hand is Indra who is the king of Gods shows the importance of the hand in the hierarchy of organs of the body. In fact, if the hands refuse to do anything, the mind and the heart would be helpless; they would not be able to implement their noble and grand intentions no matter how lofty they are.]

The Naadis (the network of veins and nerves) of the body enable the hands to do anything at all (because otherwise the hands would become numb and lifeless).

Hence, that which empowers, regulates and activates the hands to do deeds and take actions, that which make the deeds worthy of being done by the hands and make things worthy of being held by them, that which gives Indra, the patron God of the hands, to use them to rule over the kingdom of this creation, that which flows as consciousness and vital life in the Naadis, that which enables the Pran (the breath and the vital winds present in the body that control all its vital functions) to infuse life, vitality, stamina and strength to the hands to perform its functions, that which imparts the imperceptible subtle sense that enables the hands to automatically and involuntarily decide what it should and should not do, touch and hold, that which gives a sense of joy, happiness and bliss to the hands when it accomplishes a task successfully, that which inspires the heart to give full emotional support to the hands in their endeavours, and that which pervades throughout the body as its life, vitality and consciousness---verily, that is indeed the venerable Atma.

Verily, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless [11].

12. Similarly, the two legs are the medium by which the Atma moves (while residing in the body of a creature); hence they are called 'Adhyatma'. [Only a living creature shows movement, and so the very fact that the man can move from one place to another with the help of the legs establishes that it is one organ of the body, like the hands in the previous verse, that showcases the stupendous and magnificent powers of the Atma that it can make even a gross and lifeless bundle of bones, flesh, nerves and veins that the body is, to move from one place to another.]

The places they go to and which are worthy of going, are called 'Adhibhut' (because they pertain to the places in the gross world made up of the elements called Bhuts. The legs carry the body anywhere it is asked or commanded by the mind to take it. But a wise man uses his wisdom and intellect to advice the legs to go to only those places which are worth of going, and bars it from moving towards places unworthy for the Atma to venture into.)

Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and caretaker of the creation as well as the 2nd of the Trinity Gods (consisting of the creator Brahma, the sustainer Vishnu, and the concluder Shiva), who is the patron God of the legs, is the 'Adhidaivat'. [The reason is very evident. Legs help a man to carry out all the activities in this world. Without the legs, a man feels exceedingly helpless and hapless. The hands can do anything and catch anything only if the legs take the man to the site. The legs are the pivot that holds the edifice of the body erect and gives it its majesty and prominence. A sick man remains lying in a reclining posture, whereas the ability to stand is seen as a sign of better health in him. Further, a man's valour, potentials, stamina and abilities are made effective because of the legs, for a lame man can do very little in his active life which requires a lot of physical movements. Likewise, the body can obey the orders of the mind to, say, go on a pilgrimage, to help someone in distress, to perform any religious duty, or even to enable the body to perform its daily chores, only if the legs cooperate. In fact, the hands and legs are the two external instruments of the Atma which act as its secretary and assists it to complete its journey in the world without hindrance, and accomplish all righteous and virtuous deeds in order to become entitled to get liberation and deliverance from the shackles of its past misdemeanours that had forced it to assume a body in the first place.]

The various Naadis (tubular ducts of the body; veins and nerves) are central to the functioning of the legs, because otherwise, if the Naadis do not function properly or refuse to cooperate with the legs, they would be paralysed and helpless to move.

Therefore, that which empowers and activates the legs to move and perform their function of carrying the body, that which regulates the movements of the legs, that which renders importance to place where the legs go and take the Atma resident in the body, that which delegates its majestic and supernatural powers to Lord Vishnu to carry out his duties as the sustainer and caretaker of the creation, that which flows in the Naadis as their vital energy, life and consciousness, that which enables the Pran (the vital life giving breath and other vital winds that regulate the different functions of the body) to provide the legs with sufficient stamina, strength and energy to move, that which sub-consciously and subtly tells/advises the legs where to go and where not to go, that which gives satisfaction and a sense of achievement to the legs that they have attained their destination successfully, that which, while living in the subtle space of the heart, inspires it to lend its full support and help to the legs to carry on their functions properly and enable the man to walk purposefully, and that which pervades throughout the body as its life, vitality and consciousness---verily, that is indeed the venerable Atma.

Surely, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [12].

13. Like the symbolisms drawn above, the anus of the body is the 'Adhyatma' aspect (because the Atma uses it to eliminate all waste matter of the body which is harmful to it); the faecal matter (which is the grossest matter of the body and formed after all the vital and essential nutrients have been extracted from it by the Atma to sustain the body and the various Gods symbolically residing in the body of a creature) is the 'Adhibhut', and the 'death' aspect represents 'Adhidaivat' (because the matter eliminated from the anus has no life in it whatsoever; if it is allowed to remain inside the body, it would cause immense harm. All elements of life have been extracted from the food eaten by the man, and the excreta symbolises death because life has been consumed from it. But the Atma still lives on, hale and hearty, in the body; it is not at all bothered by this 'death'. So, in other words, the lifeless form of food is God of death who serves the living Atma by removing lifeless things from its path).

The Naadis are at the core of the whole process. [Incidentally, the Mool Kand, which is a knot of Naadis or nerves and veins, also has its location in the area of the anus.] The veins and nerves help the alimentary canal to function normally, and helps the nutrients extracted from the food eaten to reach all the corners of the body and the unwanted residual useless matter to be expelled through the anus.

Hence, that which enables the anus to carry out its functions and regulates it, that which also gives the residual matter its shape and consistency and helps it to come out of the body and then decay into its primary constituents or elements, the earth, that which empowers the natural process to bring about decay of faecal matters into their basic elements such as the earth, water, fire (heat and energy), air (as smell), and the sky (in which the smell disperses and the residual matters expelled by the anus are scattered), that which flows through the Naadis as the vital life factor and consciousness, that which empowers the Pran to give sufficient strength to the anus to carry out its designated functions of elimination, that which enlightens a man about this knowledge and matters related to healthy expulsion of body's residue, that which gives the satisfaction obtained after the anus has carried out its functions properly (i.e. when the expulsion of stool is complete, thereby providing great relief to the body and the mind), that which resides in the subtle sky of the heart and inspires the latter to concentrate its energy and attention as well as supply sufficient blood to the organ of the anus so that it can function normally and properly, and that which pervades uniformly throughout the body as its vital life force and consciousness—verily, that is indeed the Atma.

Verily, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [13]

14. Similarly, the genital organs are the 'Adhyatma' aspect (because the Atma creates a new creature through the help of this organ). The immense pleasure derived from using this organ relates to worldly pleasures and not spiritual pleasures; hence it is called 'Adhibhut'. The patron God of creation who oversees the entire process of creation, Brahma the creator, is obviously the 'Adhidaivat'.

The Naadis (nerves and veins of the body) are at the centre of the use of the organs of creation (i.e. the genitals), and they help in their proper functioning.

Therefore, that which activates, empowers and regulates the genital organs to carry out their functions, that which enables the particular and typical sensations

associated with sexual activity to being categorized as extreme pleasure, ecstasy, joy, blissfulness, exhilaration and elation leading to immense satisfaction, that which empowers Prajapati (Brahma) to create, that which flows through the Naadis as their vital life and consciousness, that which empowers Pran to participate in the divine function of creation, that which is at the core of the science and knowledge of creation, that which gives immense degree of happiness and pleasure in the process of creation, that which lives in the subtle space or sky of the heart and regulates the creation process from there (because the vital emotions of love, desire and passions that are so typical of the sexual process leading to the initiation of the reproductive cycle are associated with the heart more than the mind), and that which pervades uniformly through the body as its vital life factor and consciousness—verily, that indeed is the Atma.

Surely, it is indeed the glorious Atma. It is the Atma that is the only venerable and honourable entity worth adoring and worshipping, worth contemplating and meditating upon. The Atma does not decay or perish; it neither becomes old and infirm or decrepit. The Atma is immortal and eternal; it is fearless; it is without sorrows and sufferings and is free from miseries; it is without an end; it is infinite and measureless. [14]

15. The entity defined above (i.e. the Atma) is the supreme Lord of all that exists (i.e. it is 'Sarvesh'; it is an all knowing and omniscient authority (i.e. it is 'Sarwagya'); it is the emperor of all other authorities and therefore superior to them (i.e. it is 'Sarwaadhipati'); it knows the internal feelings and emotions of all (i.e. it is 'Antaryam') because it resides in the center of the heart of all creatures; and it is the basic root from which the rest of the creation has blossomed (i.e. it is 'Sarwasya-Yoni').

It is the entity that is adored, revered, honoured, worshipped and paid tribute to when one enjoys happiness and comfort of any kind, but it does not praise anything itself. [This is because it is the most superior authority in creation, and therefore all are subordinate to it; it shows its benevolence upon its juniors by letting them be proud of their status and activities, but it knows that they are merely carrying out the duties delegated to them by it, and the successful completion of anything is also due to that authority's support and help. Therefore, it just keeps smiling at their false sense of pride and ego like a caring and doting parent brushes aside small mischief of his or her offspring!]

It is the object of worship and adoration by all the Vedas and other scriptures, but it does not worship or pays tribute to them (because a junior king offers his tribute to the emperor, but the other way round is not the norm).

All forms of food are meant to serve it; that supreme entity has the first right over food. But it does not serve the food or is subservient to it. [In other words, the food is meant to be of use by the Pran in the form of the Atma, because the Atma uses the nutrients contained in the food to sustain and nourish the whole body of the creature. All other Gods, who are actually personified forms of the various vital forces of Nature that regulate the various functions of the organism which is a microcosm of the vast macrocosmic Nature, are dependent upon the Pran and the nutrients in the food for their sustenance and life. Though it appears that the entire body and all the patron Gods enjoy food and have equal right over it, but the fact is that it is the Pran or the Atma to which the food is actually offered, and the Atma being a kind, benevolent and magnanimous king then redistributes that food to all the other Gods

according to their needs and requirements. Even in our day-to-day lives we observe that food is meant to serve us, and it is not the other way round.]

Besides this, it is like the 'eye' of the entire creation, for it is the Atma that enables the living creature to 'see' anything (because a dead entity does not see). It is the authority that commands everyone. It is the life and soul of all the creatures; it is the consciousness present in all the organs of the body that lends life and vitality to the creature and the organs of the body of that creature (because without the Atma, all the organs would be dead and become numb and lifeless; they would die without the Atma being present in the body to which the organs belong). It enables the 'Mana' (representing the heart and mind, the emotions and thoughts, dispositions and inclinations, intentions and purpose; wishes and desires; attention and sub-conscious) to make various 'Sankalps' (resolutions, determinations, vows, firm aspirations and promises). It proves the truth of the maxim of the eternal and eclectic knowledge propounded by the scriptures that everything else except the Atma is perishable. It is beatitude and felicity, peace and tranquility personified. And it is the ultimate resting place where everything that exists finally takes its rest; it is the entity in which everything dissolves and becomes one, without leaving a trace.

The conception of anything having a fraction or division or part does not apply to it, because it is one indivisible and immutable whole. It is beyond the imagination of anyone that it can be ever counted and measured in numerical terms; it is beyond the purview of imagination itself. Say then, where is the question of duality in it¹?

Again, since it does not die, being eternal and imperishable, say then how can it be ever possible to determine whether it dies or not? It's absurd to even think of this possibility.

It cannot be known or ascertained from within and without (i.e. it is simply beyond comprehension). It cannot be known and ascertained by trying to peep inside it, or closely examining it from the outside. It is such a mysterious and mystical entity that it can neither be called a treasury of knowledge, wisdom and erudition, nor as being devoid of these glorious virtues. In fact, it remains aloof from and beyond the domain of knowledge and erudition, because it does not need to acquire any knowledge and wisdom, being a fount and treasury of these virtues itself, and it does not wish to get involved in futile debates that ignorant fools, who do not know the whole facts, indulge in.

But it's such a magnificent and fantastic entity that though it remains quiet and indifferent to acquiring knowledge, appearing to be not interested in enhancing its level of erudition and wisdom, it is nevertheless all knowing and omniscient.

Except this profound tenet about the Atma, there is no other maxim or axiom that can be preached or expounded or postulated regarding emancipation and salvation. This is also the fundamental preaching and the tenet of the Vedas; it is the basic essence contained in their canons². [15]

[Note—¹If anything is fractionable and divisible, a person can think of the possibility of the existence of its various divisions or fractions or aspects. For example, it is possible to split even the atom, which is the 'brick' used to construct the structure of any molecule, into its various components—the electrons, the protons and the neutrons. But is it possible to break the negative-charged electrons into something else that is not negatively charged? To take another example, a log of wood would remain 'wood' no matter how its shape and size are changed; it can never be categorised as iron or anything else. Electron can change its hidden energy into various forms of energy that it produces, such as heat, electricity and light, but the inherent dynamism of the electron, called its

‘energy’, can never change. What changes is the form and shape of the energy, but not its basic nature of being the vital force that lends the electron its value and importance in the field of electronics or other aspects of atomic physics. Wood can change into umpteen numbers of shapes and sizes, but all these things would be called ‘made of wood’ and nothing else.

Similarly, the Atma is that single unchanging entity that cannot be assigned numbers and divisions; it is non-dual and it cannot exist in more than one form. It uniformly pervades everywhere, in all imaginable shapes and forms. But to come to the basics, all these would nevertheless be called Atma and nothing else.

²The Vedas preach about the supremacy of the Atma over all other things in this creation. This Atma is the supreme conscious factor present in the whole creation. Whatever that exists is a manifestation of the Atma. Since all that exists is nothing but the Atma, it naturally follows that knowledge and wisdom is also Atma; these qualities and virtues are exhibited by the Atma. At the same time, the lack of knowledge is also a part of creation; therefore it is also an exhibit of the Atma. In short, one should understand that this Atma is an entity that is impossible to comprehend by logic and debates, or by applying rationality and the test of physical proof. This is the great paradox and mystery of the Atma.

See also canto 3, verse no. 1-3, and canto 7, verse no. 1.]

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-----Canto 6-----

[This canto stresses that all that exists in this creation is one or the other manifestation of the same omnipresent, all pervading Narayan. The latter is the ubiquitous, almighty, supreme and transcendental Lord of creation, and it is he that subtly and imperceptibly dwells everywhere in every form.]

1. There was nothing in the world before the creation came into existence. What was there had no cause or root for its existence, and neither did it have any foundation to support it. It was from that indescribable entity that this creation, this kingdom, came into being. [1]

2. The eyes, the faculty of sight, and the object of sight (the things that are seen by the eyes) are Narayan¹. Similarly, the ear, the faculty of hearing, and the things that are heard are all a revelation of the same Narayan. The nose, the faculty of smell, and the things that are smelt are all the different manifestations of Narayan. The tongue, the faculty of taste, and the things tasted are nothing but Narayan. The skin, the faculty of touch and feeling, and the things felt are all Narayan. The mind, the faculty of thought, and the things thought about are all Narayan. The intellect, the faculty of reasoning, intelligence and discrimination, and the object of the application of these faculties are all Narayan.

Likewise, the inherent quality known as Ahankar (pride and ego; vanity, arrogance and haughtiness), the trait of having Ahankar, and the objects and things that cause or create the element of Ahankar in a creature—all are nothing but Narayan in this form.

Chitta (the faculty of reasoning and thought, the conscious intellect, the powers of discrimination, understanding, paying attention, memorizing, and the ability to recollect and store information that are characteristics of the conscious powers exhibited by the mind and intellect apparatus, the sub-conscious and memory; the ability to concentrate and focus the mind on anything), the stupendous and magnificent powers that are exhibited by Chitta, and the object of application of Chitta—all are manifestations of the same Narayan.

Speech, the faculty that controls speech, the words spoken, and that which is the subject matter of speech, they are all Narayan. Similarly, the hands, the ability of the hands to hold anything, and the objects that are held by the hands—are all Narayan. The legs, the powers of the legs to move, and the places the legs visit—all are the different manifestations of the same Narayan. The anus, the power to expel, and the matter expelled are all Narayan. The genitals, the powers to recreate, and the bliss and ecstasy obtained by their use are all revelations of the same Narayan.

Verily, Narayan is the bearer, sustainer and nourisher (called 'Dhata'), he is the one who determines destiny (hence is called 'Vidhata'), he is the doer of all things and taker of all actions (hence called a 'Karta'), he is the specialist and expert of all deeds done and actions taken in the world (hence called 'Vikarta'), and he is the only majestic, glorious, magnificent and splendorous, supreme divine entity which is the one of its kind and most exalted [2].

[Note—(i)¹This is because that sublime, transcendental entity was the supreme Authority, called *Narayan* here, was the one from whom the rest of the creation came into being. Rather, it would be more appropriate to say that that supreme, sublime and subtle force of creation revealed itself into myriad forms while exercising control over each revelation by holding the reins in its own hand. And how was it made possible? That primary force known as Narayan subtly and imperceptibly injected himself as the Atma of every thing that was created. This Atma was the life and the vitality of all that came into being; it represented consciousness that is inherent in every life form that exists. This same Atma assumed different roles and performed different jobs depending upon the needs of the circumstances. For example, when the need arose to see, it assumed the form of the eye, and the faculty of sight that would enable the inert instrument of the eye to see and make a sense of what was being seen. At the same time, since everything is the Atma, the thing that the eye sees is also one of the various forms of the Atma.

This leads us to a very interesting conclusion—it is the Atma (in the form of the consciousness and the faculty of sight having its controlling centre in the brain) that sees its own self (as the object that is seen) by its own self (as the instrument of the eye). This applies to all the other organs and virtues that are mentioned in this verse.

The word Narayan is used in the Purans to mean Lord Vishnu from whose forehead Lord Shiva was said to be created, while Brahma the creator emerged atop a divine lotus that sprouted from Vishnu's navel. This Brahma created the Vedas and the rest of the visible creation. According to this lore, Vishnu is the father of both Shiva and Brahma. Vishnu is also depicted as the sustainer and nourisher and protector of the creation created by Brahma. According to the Upanishadic lore, he is the Viraat Purush, which means that he is the sum-total of all the gross bodies in this creation. Simply put it means that the Viraat incorporates

in his body all the gross forms that this creation has taken. In other words, Lord Vishnu as Viraat represents at the macro level what the individual creature is at the micro level.

(2) This verse essentially says that all forms of creation, the gross as well as the subtle, the microcosm as well as the macrocosm, the lowly as well as the high, the good as well as the bad—in fact everything without exception is a revelation of the one and the same Brahm or Atma known as Narayan. This is the non-dual view of creation and the world. See also canto 7, verse no.1 in this context.]

3. Aditya (the Sun God), Rudra (Lord Shiva; the angry form of God who oversees the conclusion of the creation), Vayu (the Wind God), Vasu (the patron God of worldly assets needed to sustain normal life in the world), and Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God who are regarded as the physician of the Gods), the three Vedas—the Rig, the Yajur and the Sam along with their hymns called Mantras, Agni (the Fire God), and the offering of Ghee or clarified butter that is made to the sacred fire—all of them are the same Narayan in different forms.

It is from this Narayan that everything that exists has risen. He is radiant and splendid, stupendous and magnificent, divine and sublime, eclectic and ethereal. He is one and the only one. He is one and the only Lord. [3]

4. Narayan is the mother, he is the father, he is the brother, he is the dwelling for the creature and the rest of the creation; he is the solace and the succour, the reprieve and the relief, and he is the friend as well as the destination or final resting place for the creature and the rest of the creation. [4]

5. There are many Naadis (veins and nerves) in the body, and it is the radiant and glorious Narayan who has revealed himself as the consciousness, the vital spark of life which flows and vibrates through these Naadis. Some of the names of these magnificent and glorious Naadis are the following—Viraja, Sudarshan, Jita, Somya, Amogha, Kumara, Amrita, Satya, Madhyama, Nasira, Shishura, Asura, Surya, and Bhaswati. [5]

[Note—The consciousness that keeps the Naadis alive and active is the supreme force called Narayan. Earlier, canto 5 has asserted that it is the Atma that flows and empowers these Naadis; it is the Atma that is their prime energy and life giving and sustaining vital force or factor. Now this verse says that it is Narayan. Therefore we deduce that Atma and Narayan are synonymous and one and the same entity having two names. While Atma is basically a term preferred by the Upanishads, Narayan is preferred by the Purans.

This canto has a great significance in as much as it establishes a bridge between the Upanishads and the Purans; it establishes the non-duality of Brahm. It unequivocally shows that the scriptures talk about the same entity when they refer to 'the supreme and transcendental One', though the terminology used to refer to that 'One' differs from text to text.]

6. That which thunders and rumbles (in the clouds), that which sings or is sung (e.g. the hymns of the Vedas that are recited by scholars), that which flows or blows (e.g. the water and the wind), that which falls (as rain), that which takes the form of Varun (the patron God of water), that which takes the form of Arayama (i.e. the Sun God), that which takes the form of Chandrama (the Moon God), that which takes the form of Kaal (the patron God of death; death and end of anything

personified), that which takes the form of a Kavi (literally a poet, but here meaning one who is skilled with words and literature; hence the word refers to wise and scholarly people who are good orators and preachers as well), that which takes the form of a Dhata (a caretaker, sustainer, nourisher, mother), that which takes the form of Prajapati (the lord and master of the subjects of a kingdom; the king and guardian of people; here referring to the different celestial Gods who were assigned the duty to look after the subjects of Brahma's creation), that which takes the form of Brahma (the 4-headed creator of the gross, visible world and the pronouncer of the Vedas), that which takes the form of Maghava (the Lord of clouds and rain; here referring to Indra, the king of Gods), that which takes the form of a Day and a Half-Day (i.e. a short period of time), that which takes the form of various Kalaas¹ (referring to the sixteen virtues and qualities present in a creature), that which takes the form of Kalpa (a long period of time; a sacred performance; a specific process of medical treatment or spiritual attainment; a manner to remove doubts), that which takes the form of higher and sacred aspect of anything, that which takes the form of various directions called 'Dishaas', and that which takes the form of the rest of everything else that exists—verily, all of them are nothing but Narayan. [That is, all the entities listed here are the various manifestations of the same immutable, ubiquitous, supreme and transcendental Authority known as Narayan.] [6]

Note—¹The Kalaas referred to here are the sixteen so-called 'Kalaas' of a man which represent his different attributes, strengths, qualities and virtues. Since a man is an exact replica of the 'Viraat Purush', who in turn is a subtle manifestation of the sublime Brahm, these sixteen qualities or attributes of a man refer to the 16 qualities of Brahm himself. These qualities or attributes are the following — (i) Shraddha (श्रद्धा—faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (प्राण —life; the very essence of creation), (iii) Akash (आकाश —the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (वायु —wind, air element), (v) Tej (तेज —energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element; see also section 2, 5 and 6), (vi) Apaha (अपः —water element which is the all-important ingredient for life —see also section 5 and 6) (vii) 'Prithivi' (पृथ्वी —earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation —see also section 5 and 6) (viii) Indriya (इन्द्रिय —the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (मन —mind and heart and their stupendous potentials —see also section 5 and 6), (x) Anna (अन्न—food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy —see also section 5 and 6), (xi) Virya (वीर्य —semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (तपः —austerity and penance, forbearance and tolerance of hardships, carrying out strict religious vows) (xiii) Mantra (मन्त्र —the ability to give good advise, the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (कर्म —taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (लोक —worldly interactions and behaviours), and (xvi) Naam (नाम —name, fame, renown, honour and glory).

(ii) In simple terms it means that a person's total composite personality, his characteristic attributes and individuality, his vitality and stamina, his prowess, powers and strength, his drive and vigour et al can be divided into sixteen parts.]

7. 7. All that is happening now, or all that exists now in the present, all that had happened and existed in the past, and all that would happen and exist in the future—verily, they are all manifestations of the divine Purush. [The word Purush refers to the primary Male who is also known as the Viraat Purush as well as Vishnu.]

He is the supreme and transcendental Lord of the immortal world (i.e. the heaven). He is also the Lord of all the mortal creatures who sustain and develop themselves relying upon the strength provided by the food eaten by them (and as a natural corollary die in the want of food). [That is, the mortal creatures of the world have no strength of their own; they depend on food for survival and development; they perish when the food is not made available to them. This is not the case with the supreme Lord who is ‘eternal and self sustaining’.]

Wise, erudite and scholarly persons always focus their attention on the divine, eclectic, ethereal and glorious abode of Lord Vishnu that is radiant, bright and splendorous as the Sun.

The Sun is like the ‘celestial eye’ which helps the entire creation to ‘see’ with its bright light¹.

Those senior wise men who are never angry and spiteful, who always remain alert and careful, are able to experience and witness it (i.e. they can perceive that glorious heaven where the Viraat has his residence). That which they experience, witness and realise as the supreme abode or destination of the soul is the divine and sublime abode of Lord Vishnu, and it is called the ‘Param Pad’².

This is the profound tenet which describes the path of emancipation and salvation. This is the axiom and maxim postulated in the canons of the Vedas. This is their teaching. [7]

[Note--¹Here the *Sun* is used as a metaphor for the eye of the Viraat Purush, because the Sun lightens up the realm and enables all the creatures to see everything for themselves. The individual creature is a microcosm of the Viraat Purush. That is why the patron God of the eyes is the Sun God. When the creation came into being, the Sun God took up residence in the eye of the man to enable him to see the world around him. Even as the eye is the light of the body of a man at the micro level, the heavenly sun is the eye of the Viraat Purush at the macro level.

²This destination is the supreme state which a spiritual aspirant aspires to achieve. It is not any physical place known as ‘heaven’ as such, but it is a symbolic destination whereby the soul of the individual creature reaches the citadel of spiritualism where the soul becomes one with its primary source, the supreme cosmic Soul, by merging with it. This is its final destination, and is called emancipation and salvation. The devotee reaches the destination which he aspires for. For example, devotees of Vishnu find an abode where that Lord resides, and that abode is called Vaikunth. Those who worship Viraat Purush reach Brahma Loka. Those who worship Brahm also reach Brahma Loka, but this abode is a symbolic heaven, for the worshippers of Brahm, there is no return to this mundane world as they would have merged their souls with the cosmic Soul known as Brahm. An entire Upanishad is dedicated to Lord Narayan. It is called ‘Narayano-upanishad’ and is included as Chapter 7 of the volume dealing with Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda in this series. Another Upanishad dedicated to this theme appears in the Atharva Veda, and it is called ‘Tripadvibhuti Maha-Narayan Upanishad’.]

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Canto 7

[This canto essentially describes and extols the pure conscious and all-pervading cosmic entity called the Atma in its macrocosmic, subtle and sublime form which imbues and imbrues the entire creation from within and without. It also highlights the magical and mystical attributes of this esoteric entity known as the Atma—the great mystery that ‘it is’ and ‘it is not’ at the same time. This particular paradox is typical of the Atma and makes it beyond comprehension. Another almost identical Upanishad is ‘Adhyatmo-panishad’ which is chapter 15 of this book. Its verse no.1 is a virtual image of this Canto. Besides, the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad has a similar exposition in its Canto 3, Brahmin 7. This Upanishad is Chapter 2 of this volume.]

1.That Atma which resides in the cavern-like deep recesses of the heart inside the body, has no birth or any beginning, is the only one of its kind, and is eternal, everlasting, constant and perpetual. [This is the microcosmic Atma that is being referred to here. See also canto 4. The same Atma pervades the whole cosmos as the macrocosmic Atma. This fact is postulated now--]

The ‘Prithivi’ (the earth) is its (Atma’s) body; it pervades uniformly throughout the earth (as its life sustaining and nourishing virtue and its other magnificent characteristic qualities). But the irony is that the earth element is not aware of its presence and importance (i.e. the earth does not know that all its glorious virtues and potentials that make it so renowned, sought after, important and vital are because of the Atma residing inherently in its bosom while uniformly soaking the entire earth with its consciousness that radiates out from it like the rays of the sun; see also canto 5, verse no.15). [The earth thinks that it has such a great importance that no life can exist without it; it is the foundation upon which the rest of the creation rests; it is vital for sustenance and nourishment of the creation. But it errs in its conceptions. It is the Atma inherently present in the earth element that enables the earth to exhibit its stupendous qualities.]

The ‘Apaha’ (water element) is its (Atma’s) body; it pervades uniformly throughout the water element (as its vital strength and its energy, its life sustaining and nourishing virtues, and its vital importance and significance). But the irony is that the water element is not aware of its presence and importance (i.e. the water does not know that all its glorious virtues that make it so renowned, sought after, important, significant and vital are because of the Atma residing inherently in it). [Like the earth, the water element also thinks that it is very important for life, but it forgets that left on its own, it is powerless. It is the vital Atma present in the water that makes it so important and useful for life and creation. The pride of the water about its importance is misplaced and misconceived.]

The ‘Tej’ (energy, the virtues of radiance, splendour, majesty, strength and glory) that a creature possesses is its (Atma’s) body. It pervades uniformly throughout the Tej element (as its vital strength, powers and energy, its glorious and majestic virtues, its magnificence, splendour and radiance, its vital importance and significance). But the irony is that neither the Tej nor the creature is aware of its presence and importance (i.e. the Tej does not know that all its glorious and unique virtues that make it so renowned, sought after, important, significant and vital are because of the Atma residing inherently in it). [Like its predecessors, the Tej thinks that it has such magnificent virtues and stupendous powers that it is sought by

everyone; but it forgets that all its glorious and magnificent virtues are actually those of the Atma which resides in its body. Without the Atma, the Tej would be lifeless and without any radiance as an extinguished fire.]

The 'Vayu' (the wind element) is its (Atma's) body; it pervades uniformly throughout the wind element (as its vital strength and its energy, its life sustaining and nourishing virtues, lending it its vital importance and significance). But the irony is that the wind element is not aware of its presence and importance (i.e. the wind does not know that all its glorious and unique virtues that make it so renowned, sought after, important, significant and vital are because of the Atma residing inherently in it). [For example, the wind thinks that it is so powerful that it has uprooted trees in a strong and fiercely blowing storm, but it does not realise that the force that enabled it to become so powerful and potent and bring about this uprooting is the Atma intrinsically and inherently present in it. It becomes unduly proud of its own potentials, but this pride is unwarranted and is an erroneous notion. This concept has been elaborately explained in Keno-panishad of the Sam Veda tradition by citing an example, wherein a Yaksha asks the Wind God to lift a dry leaf, and it fails to move it.]

The 'Akash' (the sky; the space; the Firmament) is its (Atma's) body; it pervades uniformly throughout it (lending the sky its characteristic features and qualities—as being vast, endless, measureless, immutable, eternal, everlasting, colourless, pure, incorruptible, spotless, neutral, calm, tranquil, steady and perpetual, omnipresent, all encompassing and all pervading etc.). But the irony is that the sky element is not aware of its presence and importance (i.e. the sky or Akash element does not know that all its glorious and magnificent virtues that makes it so renowned and famous, so important, significant and vital, so unique and one of its kind, is because of the Atma residing inherently in it).

The 'Mana' of a creature (the mind and heart; the thoughts and emotions; that which involves a creature's attention) is its (Atma's) body; it pervades uniformly throughout the Mana (and determines all the emotions and thoughts of a creature; it determines the desires, determinations, aspirations, hopes, volition and expectations that a creature has; it determines where the mind fixes itself and where not). But the irony is that the Mana is not aware of its presence and importance (i.e. the Mana does not know that all its glorious and astounding virtues that make it so renowned, pampered and sought after, so important, significant and vital are because of the Atma residing inherently in it). [Like the earth, the water, the sky and the Tej, the Mana also thinks that it is very important for a creature and it determines how the creature thinks and behaves, that it determines the basic character of the creature. But it forgets that left on its own, it is powerless. It is the vital Atma present in the Mana that makes it so important and useful for life and creation. The pride of the Mana of its importance is therefore misplaced and misconceived.]

The 'Buddhi' (the intellect, reasoning and discrimination faculty of a creature) is its (Atma's) body; it pervades uniformly throughout it; it forms an integral part of the stupendous faculty known as intelligence, erudition and wisdom. That is, the Atma gives the Buddhi its glorious virtues and qualities. It gives it its exalted stature that is so much in demand and sought after by all. But the irony is that the Buddhi is not aware of its presence and importance (i.e. the intellect, rationality and discrimination of a creature does not know that all its glorious virtues that makes it so renowned and famous, so important, significant and vital, so unique and one of its kind, so powerful and majestic, is because of the Atma residing inherently in it). [Left to its self, the Buddhi would not be able to do anything at all like its other peers—the

water, wind, sky and Tej. The creature thinks that it is very intelligent, erudite and wise, but it forgets that the mind and intellect are an integral part of the brain which itself is a part of the body that is perishable, while the quality that is represented by the intellect, i.e. the power and ability to think logically, coherently and cogently, to be able to discriminate between good and the bad, to deduce and interpret a set of data intelligently, are all eternal and everlasting qualities of creation. Therefore it cannot be the quality of the intellect, which is part of the brain, because the latter is perishable along with the body of the creature. So, it is the Atma that lives inherently inside the intellect and lends it its stupendous potentials and glories that are so much lauded in the form of Buddhi, because the Atma is eternal and everlasting like these virtues exhibited by the intellect.]

The 'Ahankar' (the sense of ego and pride that a creature possesses) is its (Atma's) body; it is the Atma that gives any credence to these qualities in a creature and makes it feel proud and haughty. [That is, it is the vital forces and potentials of the Atma which enables the creature to accomplish certain goals that entitles it to be proud of its accomplishments.] But the irony is that Ahankar is not aware of its presence and importance. [That is, the proud creature is not aware of this fact and thinks that all its achievements are due to its own efforts, and it is he who deserves the glory and praise. This is what is meant when it is said that Ahankar is the body of the Atma. It is the Atma that gives the quality known as Ahankar or ego, pride, haughtiness and arrogance its value and significance. In other words, it is the Atma living inside the man as his 'consciousness' that enables him to accomplish great tasks for which he feels so proud. Had it not been for the Atma, the man would not have been able to do anything. So actually this Atma is the driving force for the Ahankar that a man has. A dead man has no Ahankar.]

The 'Chitta' of a creature (the memory and sub-conscious mind; understanding and attention; the faculty of reasoning and thought) is its (Atma's) body; it is uniformly present, integrally and inherently, in the virtue known as Chitta of a creature (enabling the latter to exhibit the stupendous abilities so typical of Chitta). But the irony is that the Chitta is not aware of it (i.e. the Chitta does not know that all its glorious potentials and powers are not of its own but due to the Atma inherent in it; the 'soul and strength' of Chitta is the Atma which is subtly present in it and which lends the former its glorious virtues). [The creature thinks that it is very wise and can remember, recollect and focus its attention on any subject out of its sweet free will and on its own accord. But it errs in it. Because the creature is not able to do anything independently on its own if it was not for the Atma present in its heart and mind, which together constitute the faculty known as Chitta that enables and entitles the creature to exhibit all functions which come under the ambit of Chitta.]

The 'Abyakta' (literally meaning that which cannot be defined, described and spoken about; that which is not manifest and evident; that which is invisible and imperceptible) is its (Atma's) body. It subtly and inherently resides in the body of the Abyakta; it is an integral part of Abyakta. [That is, the Atma is the consciousness that is an integral part of the supreme and transcendental Being called Abyakta; the latter assumes its importance and significance because it has stupendous potentials due to the Atma being subtly present in it, though this Abyakta is not evident and visible. Anything that is not immediately visible is hard to believe in, but this Abyakta cannot be ignored for its authority and majesty because of the Atma that is inherently present in it. In this verse, the word 'Abyakta' refers to the macrocosmic subtle forces of Nature that control the entire creation though they are not visible in the conventional terms. These forces are so subtle that they cannot be physically verified and described

in conventional terms, but are nevertheless very much there and playing a controlling role in creation.] But the irony is that the Abyakta is not aware of its (Atma's) presence and role in its existence and glory (i.e. the Abyakta does not know that all its glorious potentials and powers are not of its own but due to the Atma inherent in it; the 'soul and strength' of Abyakta is the Atma which is subtly present in it and which lends the former its virtues and glories). [That is, all that is un-manifest but unequivocally present in all its splendour and glory, all the invisible forces of Nature and the unknown constituents of the deep recesses of the fathomless cosmos which are collectively called Abyakta, all of them have their importance and significance because of the Atma or the truthful consciousness which pervades throughout the cosmos and its constituent Nature.]

The 'Akshar'¹ (literally meaning that which is imperishable, immortal and not subject to decay and destruction; it also means the 'word' that was at the beginning of the creation and is considered as eternal) is Atma's body. The Atma is inherently and integrally present in the Akshar (i.e. all that which is imperishable and immortal in this creation has Atma in it that lends it its immortality and permanence; it is the Atma that makes the entity acquire its importance as one that does not decay and die in the otherwise perishable and decayable world where nothing is permanent except the Atma). But the irony is that the Akshar is not aware of its (Atma's) presence and the role that it (Atma) plays in its permanent existence and glory (i.e. the Akshar does not know that all its glorious potentials and magnificent powers to remain immortal and imperishable are not of its own but due to the Atma inherent in it; the 'soul and strength' of the Akshar is the Atma which is subtly present in it and which lends the former its divine, sublime virtues and glories).

[¹If the word Akshar is taken to mean the 'eternal cosmic word', which in the context of the Upanishads is the universal word OM, then the same logic can be extended to it. That is, the divine and ethereal word OM acquires its potentials and glorious virtues because of the cosmic Soul or Atma represented by the cosmic consciousness that is present in it. Otherwise, it would be simply a combination of letters, and nothing more.]

The 'Mrityu' (death personified) is its (Atma's) body; the Atma is subtly and inherently present in death as its integral power and strength. [That is, the forces of Nature that bring about the end (death) of anything are powered by the same hidden entity that appears to overcome those forces that resist death. This superior force is personified as the God of death, called Mrityu. Just like any God, this Mrityu has the Atma at its core, and it is this Atma that empowers Mrityu to carry out its functions. When anybody dies, it is his gross physical body that dies, but the immortal Atma continues to 'live' even in the form of death as the latter is also one of its forms. Another interpretation is that it is the Atma that lends the death its powers and potentials and authority to cause death of anybody. Without the strength of the Atma, death would not be able to kill anyone. Therefore, the 'death' derives its powers to kill because it has the powerful authority called the Atma residing in it that empowers it to do so.] But the irony is that the 'death' is unaware of the Atma's presence and importance in lending the death its capabilities. [That is, the death is unaware that it is the Atma which is the driving force behind its potentials to kill and bring to an end even the exalted Gods. It is the Atma that entitles and empowers 'death' to kill and conclude this creation. Taken differently, it means that the creature is afraid of death only as long as it thinks that the body is its identity. But as soon as it realises that the Atma, which is its truthful identity, is the same as the one that lives in the entity known as 'death', all its fears of death vanish, because at the time of death the creature would be simply changing its body from one form to another; it would be

leaving its former body as a particular creature and entering the new body after death. It would not 'die' as such because the Atma is immortal and eternal.]

The Atma, with the mystical and magical virtues and qualities described in this verse, is an integral, inherent and intrinsic aspect or part of all creatures. It is sinless, immaculate, uncorrupt and pristine pure. It is divine, ethereal, holy and glorious. It is majestic, stupendous and magnificent. It is one and only of its kind. It is indeed and verily called Narayan. [1]

[Note—This canto is very similarly to other cantos of this Upanishad, e.g. cantos 3, 5 and 8. All describe the stupendous and glorious virtues of the Atma.]

2. This knowledge was revealed to an ancient Brahmin named Apant Ratam. The latter imparted it to Brahma, the creator, and it was subsequently passed on by him to sage Ghoranghiras. From him it came down to sage Raikwa; from the latter it came to Ram. Thence it was preached by him to all the creatures of the world. The profound axioms and maxims that constitute the body of this great and sublime knowledge is the path leading to ultimate emancipation and salvation, called 'Nirvan', of a creature. This is the great tenet expounded and postulated by the Vedas; this is the teaching of the Vedas; this is the essence of the canons of the Vedas. [2]

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Canto 8

[This canto briefly postulates that the body, in which the Atma resides as an all-important inhabitant living in the heart, is a temporary habitat of the Atma because the body is itself temporary and perishable. On the contrary, the Atma is eternal and imperishable. This Atma is viewed by enlightened people as an embodiment of bliss and tranquility.]

1. The Atma that comfortably resides in the deep recesses of the cavernous heart, is immaculate, pure and uncorrupt. The body is a composite of marrow, flesh and blood. It is very temporary and transient, subject to imminent and unpredictable decay and destruction. It is like a cinema being played out on a canvas or a wall. All its enthralling attractions and fascinating charms are only delusions like the magnificent beauty of the city of Gandharvas¹. It has no substance, depth and pith like the stem of a banana tree which has no hard and sturdy strength in it. It (the body) is just like a bubble of water which is fickle, transient and unstable.

But the Atma is independent of the body and its inherent limitations (though the Atma resides in it). This Atma, inter alia, has the following attributes—it is an entity that is beyond thoughts, imagination and understanding; it is divine, eclectic, ethereal, holy, radiant, glorious and majestic; it is the Lord who has no company and peer (it is the unquestioned emperor of the realm and has no match); it is pure, immaculate and pristine; it is an embodiment of 'Tej' (divine light, radiance, splendour, dazzle, majesty, glory, vitality, potentials, strength and energy); it has no physical or subtle attributes such as having any forms, shapes, contours, colours, size and qualities; it is the undisputed Lord God of all that exists; it is beyond the purview of the mind and the intellect; and it has no 'body' of its own. [On the face of it, this statement seems to contradict Canto 7 which enumerates a number of entities that are

regarded as the 'body' of the Atma. But on close examination we observe that none of them is the Atma's specific body. They are all equally treated by the Atma to reside in; it has no preference for one over the other. Had any one of them been the Atma's so-called 'own' body, it would have endeared it and given priority to it. They are merely like temporary inns for the Atma during its sojourn in this life till the time of final merger with its parent body, the cosmic consciousness known as Brahm. Just like an itinerant traveler can't claim property rights over any of the rooms in the hotels he stayed during his travels, the Atma too does not own any of the so-called forms or bodies in which it stayed while undertaking the journey in this world. Once the Atma moves out of a particular form (body), all relationships cease to exist. They matter only till the time the Atma resides in any of the bodies.]

This Atma, which is ensconced in the cave-like heart of the creature, is like the ambrosia of beatitude and felicity, of happiness and joy, called Amrit. It is glorious and divine, and magnificently radiant and splendorous. Those who are wise, scholarly, erudite and sagacious look at it, or view it as an embodiment and fount of bliss, happiness and peace. When everything dissolves in the ocean of peace, bliss and happiness, they see nothing beyond it (i.e. they feel sufficiently contented and fulfilled that they need not look anywhere else for comfort and solace once they have realised the truth about the Atma)². [1].

[Note—¹The *Gandharvas* are mythological musicians of the Gods. They live in decorated cities and also deck themselves up in all finery like stage players. They conjure up fascinating scenes to entertain the Gods. Therefore, they are used as a metaphor to describe anything that is not real but looks very charming and attractive from the outside, because they create magic a spell of unimaginable beauty, pomp and grandeur when they perform in the heaven. All their creation are temporary and last only till the time the theatre is being played; as soon as the show is over, they wind up everything and vanish from sight. So, philosophically, this body and the world are compared to them and their cities because of the similarity of attractiveness of the illusions created, and the transience and impermanence of both.

They are mentioned in Yajur Veda, 18/38. The word Gandharva refers to their special characteristic of being very merry and joyous, and fond of sweet fragrances (Jaimini Upanishad Brahmin, 3/5/6/4). They are very lustful, lascivious, passionate and promiscuous; they like the company of females, such as celestial damsels called Apsaras (Shatpath Brahmin, 9/4/1/4). They have been assigned the duty of protection of Som, the divine drink of the Gods (Shatpath Brahmin, 3/6/2/9).

They are celestial musicians and belong to a class of lower rung semi-Gods who lived in the company of celestial damsels, called Apsaras, who danced for the entertainment of the Gods, who guarded the ambrosia of eternity and bliss, called Amrit, who were experts in treating various diseases, who were able to exercise mystical control over women and held them under their spell and charm, who sometimes tormented humans in the guise of some evil spirit, and who were great experts in the art and skill of playing music of all kinds.

The word Gandharva has other connotations also—it refers to those Gods who had the face of a horse or a deer; that Atma which has left one body and acquired another one; a tribe whose are professional singers and whose girls are professional prostitutes; the second husband of a widow who has remarried.

²They see and come to the realisation that in the final analysis, the ultimate salvation and emancipation lies in the beatitude and felicity that one gets when one discards all his delusions about this body and the world, and realises the fact that his true identity is the pure consciousness known as the Atma, his truthful residence is in the Atma. This fills the seeker with eternal peace and bliss and contentedness which are equivalent to his obtaining liberation from the troubling shackles of this gross and perishable body in which the Atma is trapped. This delivers him from all his spiritual

bondages. This is tantamount to Moksha or obtaining liberation and deliverance of the soul].

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Canto 9

[This canto describes in a step-wise manner how the process of withdrawal, or the process which is the reverse of the one involved in the unfolding of the creation, takes place. It is a telescopic view wherein one entity merges into its subtler form, and it progresses till the time nothing remains. It's like going inwards from the outside; it's also like the gradual collapse of the huge wave of the ocean into its calm waters. It's the 'retrogression' rather than the 'progression'. It elaborates and enunciates systematically how all the objects of this material world have their existence only due to the senses of perception, and how they vanish into nothingness when the creature becomes enlightened about this fact as well as about the Supreme Being from whom these perceptions and the objects of these perceptions have arisen, giving rise to this multifarious and varied world which is, in essence, nothing else but that Supreme Being in as many forms. In the final analysis, everything boils down to one essential entity—and this is the ultimate realisation. This realisation is called the 4th state of existence of the consciousness; it is also called the 'state of dissolution' because in this state everything dissolves into one whole homogenous mass, leaving no scope of duality and discord.

This Canto has an uncanny resemblance to Canto 3, Brahmin 2 of Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad in its broader perspective. Refer also to Tripadvibhut Mahanarayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3.

Canto 2, verse no.7 of this Upanishad lists the names of the sages who were the chief exponents of the philosophy propounded in it. Amongst them was one Ghorangiras, the teacher of Raikwa. The following verses are the answers which the wise teacher gave to his disciple on one of his questions—where do everything that exist finally go or vanish or dissolve into, leaving no trace whatsoever? What is their end and destiny?]

1. Once, sage Raikwa asked his teacher Ghorangiras, 'Oh Lord! In what or where do all the things set? Where do they ultimately find their rest? What finally hides and conceals them? What or where is their final dwelling where they go at last to take their ultimate rest?'

Ghorangiras replied, 'Those things that arise or have their existence because of the eye (i.e. those things which are seen or perceived by the organ of the eye which is empowered to see by the faculty of sight in the brain), they set or find their end or have their destination in the eye. [In simple terms it means that the whole visible world is there because the eye sees it to be there; the eye witnesses it and makes the creature convinced of its existence and truth. When the eye is shut, the world vanishes from existence. That is, the very existence of the world is because of the eye. And what lights up the world so that the eye can see it? The answer is the Sun. The eye has its existence and importance because of the faculty of sight that enables it to see anything. So the eye symbolically collapses into the latter when it ceases its function of seeing; the eye loses its relevance without this faculty. That is, the gross organ collapses into its subtle counterpart. For example, when water is sprinkled into the fire, the former simply vanishes into the latter, because water is grosser. Another example is this—when ice melts, it vanishes into the fluid water, for ice is a grosser

than water. This is also obvious when we observe a blind man; he wouldn't be able to see anything in spite of all things being right there in front of him, and even his gross organ of sight, i.e. the eye, is there.]

Those objects that are lighted by the Sun or make their presence visible because of the light of the Sun (Aditya), they rest in and set with their primary source, the Sun, because of which they have their relevance and recognition. [As soon as the Sun sets and darkness spreads, all things that were dependent upon the light of the Sun vanish from sight; they literally set with the Sun. The Sun God took up residence in the eye of a man at the time of creation. He has his origin in the eye of the Viraat Purush, so when the man was created in the image of the Viraat, the Sun took up his symbolic residence in the man's eye to light up the world for him even as the celestial Sun lights up the world for the Viraat.]

That Aditya (Sun) which rises (becomes visible) due to the Naadi (nerve/vein) called Viraaj, finally sets in that Viraaj. [That is, since the eye can see anything because of the optic nerve and the blood vessels that supply blood to the eye, the world is lighted and seen as long as that nerve and veins are active and conscious and functioning properly. As soon as they die or become numb and defunct, as in the case of an accident or some optical disease, the person is unable to see anything, and the world ceases to exist for him. The vitality and consciousness that flows through the Naadi, enabling and empowering it to carry on with its function of providing sight to the instrument of the eye, is symbolic of the Sun present in the eye. And with this Naadi ceasing to function, the Sun is also said to set. If this eye is shut off or damaged, the Sun cannot be seen.]

The Viraaj Naadi that acquires its vital life, its energy and its consciousness from the Pran (the life sustaining vital wind known as breath) of a creature, finds its rest in the Pran. In other words, it depends on the Pran for its survival; when the Pran exits from the body, as at the time of death, the Naadi also takes its rest, or becomes defunct and ceases to function. It literally lays down its arms along with the Pran. This Naadi collapses with the Pran; it leaves the body alongside the Pran.

The Pran that has its origin in the consciousness (because it is the subtle conscious factor or the Atma present inside the body which helps the Pran to acquire its valuable life sustaining properties as well as helping it to remain anchored to the body) also collapses back in the source of its origin, the consciousness. This consciousness is self-sustaining. It lends its radiance and glory to the Pran. It is also called Vigyan, meaning superior knowledge that is empirical and determined by application of wisdom and intellect, because without the consciousness being present in the body of a creature, it would be as good as dead, notwithstanding how hard all other entities try to keep it alive, and it would be unable to distinguish between anything, like a blind man having lost the benefit of sight. Again, a man sans his wisdom and intelligence is no better than a blind man though he may be alive and healthy.

Consciousness is called Vigyan¹ because it is self-sustained, self-enlightened, self-illuminated, radiant and glorious; it is a fount of knowledge and awareness, of wisdom and enlightenment. All other entities in this creation have whatever they have because of the potentials and powers bestowed to them by this consciousness. Their very relevance and importance and significance are there because the consciousness has given them this privilege. These entities are nothing else but a marvelous display of the magnificent majesty and potentials of the consciousness. This realisation is called Vigyan because it is based on intelligent application of knowledge and wisdom. It is Vigyan because it is empirical and thoughtful; it is rational and logical; it is

truthful, genuine and real. Vigyan refers to a superior body knowledge that is not based on hearsay or conjectures. It has a solid foundation and steady relevance.

Consciousness itself implies the truthful knowledge of anything that is real, genuine and true, and not that is merely hypothetical and imaginary. It refers to the 'real time awareness' of any given thing or event or circumstance. [For example, we say 'I am aware of such and such event'. It implies that I have certain knowledge of its happening.] Anything that has no consciousness won't know anything at all. In fact, 'life' and 'knowledge' go hand in hand. That is why the Atma or soul is called consciousness and a personification of Vigyan.

This awareness of the consciousness gives rise to bliss of self-realisation, and of witnessing and experiencing of the ethereal divinity and eclectic truth about the creation, the Atma and the Brahm. Therefore, it sets also in bliss because realisation of the Truth gives immense happiness and peace to the creature's soul. The soul does not want anything else.

That bliss and happiness collectively called 'Anand', which is found in the 4th state of existence of the consciousness called 'Turiya' when one experiences and witnesses the divine supreme transcendental Being (Brahm), also ends with Turiya. It is the 'final frontier', the ultimate goal that the soul strives to reach. So, when the fount of bliss (Anand) is reached in the Turiya state, nothing more is left to be achieved or acquired. As soon as a man abandons this supreme state of existence and wakes up into this mundane existential material world, he immediately loses that bliss which he was enjoying in the Turiya state. The word Turiya means 'fourth quarter', and once this segment is reached after crossing the first three quarters, there is nothing beyond it and the complete cycle is achieved. There is accomplishment of all that has to be accomplished; there is the 'final coming home, full cycle' for the soul. Everything comes to a full stop.

Being thus enlightened about the truth, the man moves ahead to the next phase called 'Turiya' state of existence. In this state, there is no fear of death, no sorrows, no torments, no sufferings and no perplexities related to this world. It is marked by eternal bliss, peace, tranquility and happiness. In this state the man realises his truthful form, and thus all the causes for his taking birth are rendered null and void. That is, the seed in the form of his unfilled desires and hopes as well as the consequences of his past deeds is made sterile. The 'seed' does not find compatible ground to survive and sprout into new shoots. Therefore, the 'tree' in the form of this world and representing the endless cycle of 'tree-seed-tree' symbolising birth and death is uprooted from its roots for ever.

This final quarter or state of existence called Turiya is marked by glorious virtues, such as of being equivalent to Amrit (the ambrosia of eternity and bliss), of being fearless, of being without any sufferings, pains, sorrows, torments, anguish, grief and distress of any kind, of being eternal, infinite and without an end and limitations, and of being in a state that has no 'seed' or cause from which a person would have to take any birth again. Such a person is called 'Turiya', i.e. one who has crossed the barrier, one who has traveled full circle and has attained final liberation and deliverance. Hence, he attains the supreme transcendental Brahm. [In other words, as has been said above, he comes home after having traveled full circle, and therefore has no need to go over it once again in order to find his home where he would ultimately retire and take his final rest!] [1].

[Note—¹Gyan and Vigyan are closely related to each other. The realisation or awareness that Atma is, inter alia, different from the body, and is the true identity of a creature, is called 'Gyan'. This Atma is a very unique entity and is called the 'true

self' of the creature. Gyan refers to self realisation and attainment of enlightenment about the absolute Truth and Reality in this creation. It encompasses a broad swathe of philosophy which is taught by the Upanishads, called Vedanta. When Gyan is put to test and a rational knowledge is arrived at, when it is witnessed or experienced in practical terms, it is known as 'Vigyan'; it is logical derivation, confirmation and affirmation of certain things known in theory and now ratified as the unequivocal truth and the irrefutable fact, reasoned acknowledgement, or actual witness of facts so that there is no doubt or confusion as to their authenticity, veracity and truth. In other words, Vigyan is experimental Gyan, or Gyan put to practice by following the guidelines of Vedant. It is genuine Gyan; it is rational Gyan.

Therefore, Vigyan literally means application of mind, intelligence and rational logic, having in-depth knowledge, intelligent and rational learning or science of anything which can be verified, any knowledge which is empirical, rational, logical, scientific and applicable in practice. (The concept of Vigyan has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 7 of the Sam Veda Upanishad).

Vigyan is the wisdom, erudition and intelligence that is inherent in a man. It is the rational mind that decides what is to be remembered, what is to be thought, what needs attention and concentration of mind, and what is worthy of paying any attention and thought at all in the first place. This selective aspect of the discriminatory intellect is called Vigyan.

Any body of knowledge is called Vigyan because it is verifiable and derived at by application of intellect and mind free from any pre-conceived notions and beliefs. Consciousness is called Vigyan because it is self-sustained, self-enlightened, self-illuminated, radiant and glorious; it is a fount of genuine and empirical knowledge and awareness, of wisdom and enlightenment. All other entities in this creation have whatever they have because of the potentials and powers bestowed to them by this consciousness. Their very relevance and importance and significance are there because the consciousness has given them this privilege. These entities are nothing else but a marvelous display of the magnificent majesty and potentials of the consciousness. This realisation is called Vigyan because it is based on intelligent and rational application of knowledge and wisdom. It is Vigyan because it is empirical and thoughtful; it is rational and logical; it is truthful, genuine and real. Vigyan refers to a superior body knowledge that is not based on hearsay or conjectures. It has a solid foundation and steady relevance.

Information and knowledge that stand the test of logic and rational is therefore called Vigyan; it is this Vigyan that takes a man forward. With knowledge come joy and happiness, satisfaction and a sense of achievement, elation and a sense of fulfillment. In the spiritual realm, this leads to bliss and self-realisation. This realisation pertains to the awareness of the 'self' as the irrefutable, eternal and immutable Atma or soul which is pure consciousness. The macrocosmic counterpart of this individual Atma is known as Brahm. Hence, self-realisation is equivalent to Brahm realisation.

Consciousness itself implies the truthful awareness and knowledge of anything that is real and true, and not that is hypothetical and imaginary. That is why the Atma or soul is called consciousness and a personification of Vigyan.

As we have seen here, only one of the sense organ of the body, the 'eye', is considered for discussion. The eye is the microcosm while the Sun is the macrocosm. The eye enables the individual man to see while the Sun enables the entire creation to see. The eye is the organ of the gross body, the mind represented by the Vigyan referred above is the subtle body, and the consciousness submerged in bliss is the causal body of the creature. As has been noted in the introduction of this Canto, it would be observed that it describes in vivid steps the retrogression that is involved when the creature decides to genuinely withdraw itself from the deluding world of material sense objects. Taken on a broader scale, it narrates the dissolution of the visible creation.]

2. Similarly, those things that have their existence because of the ear (i.e. those whose existence is made known to a man when he hears about them, or when he hears them speak to him), find their end or resting place in the ear. [That is, when a man closes his ears, all sounds are shut out and he remains oblivious of what is being said or what is happening around him because he does not hear anything about them or he gets no information about them.]

The ear has its existence and importance as a medium of hearing only due to the faculty of hearing, and it collapses or ceases to have any value and relevance in the absence of the latter.

The faculty of hearing has its importance and value because it can hear sounds originating from various directions; so it also sets in those directions (because when the creature is not able to hear a sound from any one direction, it raises its ears in that direction and concentrates or focuses his attention in that direction so that the ears can pick up any small bit of sound or information coming from that direction. Further, the directions have their importance because the ear can hear about them; they are correlated).

These directions are made known to the creature with the help of Naadi called Sudarshana. [This Naadi is the nerve that makes the ear able to hear any sound; the auditory nerve]. Therefore, the directions finally set or find their resting place in this Naadi. [The nerve and veins that supply sense and blood to the ear and carry the sensory perception picked up by the ear to the brain thereby enabling the man to hear, are the basis of any sound being heard from any direction. The 'directions from where the sound emanates' have their relevance only because of the nerve and vein that keep the ear functioning properly, for otherwise they wouldn't be of any relevance for the man; the man wouldn't be able to distinguish between any two directions and thereby orient himself towards them. If the Naadi malfunctions and becomes dead for any reason, the man would lose all bearings about his surroundings, he wouldn't know what is happening around him, he wouldn't be able to coordinate his reactions to whatever is happening. He would have a fit of vertigo or dizziness if the semi-circular canals in the ear do not function normally. So, these directions symbolically subside when the Naadi ceases to function. They virtually 'collapse into and rest' with the Naadi.]

The Naadi is kept alive and active by the 'conscious factor' flowing through it. The vital wind called Apaana is the wind which plays the important role in keeping the ears functioning normally. [This wind stays in the ears, besides its normal other habitat in the intestines, and helps in keeping the pressure inside the ear normal. That is why, when the pressure inside the ears is disturbed beyond a certain point, as for example during low blood pressures and when flying high in an airplane, it is advised to close the nose and blow hard so that the wind present inside the stomach presses against the tympanic membrane and restore the pressure, thereby reopening the ears. This is also the reason why when we wish to hear anything with attention we 'hold our breaths' to enable to help the ears to concentrate their energy on what is being said.]

The Apaana wind that has its origin in the consciousness present in the body collapses back or sets in that consciousness. [This is because only a living body has Apaana, or for that matter any kind of wind, for a dead body is like a piece of dead wood and it would have no use for Apaana. The consciousness helps the body to keep the Apaana anchored inside the body and prevents its escape through the anus. When the body dies, i.e. when the consciousness leaves the body, the Apaana also leaves the

body alongside with it. Therefore, the two exist simultaneously and the Apaana collapses with the collapse of life in the body.]

The consciousness (the life giving force; the awareness that the mind has about the existence of directions with relation to the ears; the faculty of hearing and the empowerment of the organs of hearing) in which the Apaana collapses or merges or coalesces is called Vigyan because it is self-sustained, self-enlightened, self-illuminated, radiant and glorious; it is a fount of knowledge and awareness, of wisdom and enlightenment. All other entities in this creation have whatever they have because of the potentials and powers bestowed to them by this consciousness. Their very relevance and importance and significance are there because the consciousness has given them this privilege. These entities are nothing else but a marvelous display of the magnificent majesty and potentials of the consciousness. This realisation is called Vigyan because it is based on intelligent application of knowledge and wisdom. It is Vigyan because it is empirical and thoughtful; it is rational and logical; it is truthful, genuine and real. Vigyan refers to a superior body knowledge that is not based on hearsay or conjectures. It has a solid foundation and steady relevance.

Consciousness itself implies the truthful awareness and knowledge of anything that is real, genuine and true, and not that is merely hypothetical and imaginary. That is why the Atma or soul is called consciousness and a personification of Vigyan. [See also verse no. 1.]

This awareness of the consciousness gives rise to bliss of self-realisation, and of witnessing and experiencing of the ethereal divinity and eclectic truth about the creation, the Atma and the Brahm. Therefore, it sets also in bliss because realisation of the Truth gives immense happiness and peace to the creature's soul.

That bliss and happiness collectively called 'Anand', which is found in the 4th state of existence of the consciousness called 'Turiya' when one experiences and witnesses the divine supreme transcendental Being (Brahm), also ends with Turiya. It is the 'final frontier', the ultimate goal that the soul strives to reach. So, when the fount of bliss (Anand) is reached in the Turiya state, nothing more is left to be achieved or acquired. As soon as a man abandons this supreme state of existence and wakes up into this mundane existential material world, he immediately loses that bliss which he was enjoying in the Turiya state. The word Turiya means 'fourth quarter', and once this segment is reached after crossing the first three quarters, there is nothing beyond it and the complete cycle is achieved. There is accomplishment of all that has to be accomplished; there is the 'final coming home, full cycle' for the soul. Everything comes to a full stop.

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limitations, and of being in a state that has no 'seed' or cause from which a person would have to take any birth again. Such a person is called 'Turiya', i.e. one who has crossed the barrier, one who has traveled full circle and has attained final liberation and deliverance. Hence, he attains the supreme transcendental Brahm. [In other words, as has been said above, he comes home after having traveled full circle, and therefore has no need to go over it once again in order to find his home where he would ultimately retire and take his final rest!] [2].

[Note—As in verse no.1, the same logics are extended to the ears in this verse. The 'ear' is the microcosm while the 'directions' are the macrocosm. The ear enlightens only a single individual, but the directions cover the whole world. The faculty of hearing and the various directions are very closely related. When a man goes to a new place, he asks to be 'directed' to that place or his destination. In other words, the direction sets in the ear because it is the ear that accepts the direction and no other organ.

All information is relevant only to a living man, not a dead person. Information and knowledge that stand the test of logic and rational is called Vigyan; it is this Vigyan that takes a man forward. With knowledge come joy and happiness, satisfaction and a sense of achievement, elation and a sense of fulfillment. In the spiritual realm, this leads to bliss and self-realisation. This realisation pertains to the awareness of the irrefutable and immutable Atma or soul which is consciousness. The macrocosmic counterpart of this individual Atma is known as Brahm. Hence, self-realisation is equivalent to Brahm realisation.]

3. In a similar way, all things which make their presence felt because of the smell or fragrance they emanate, have their existence because of the nose and its sense of smell, because it is the nose that makes a man aware of their presence by picking up the smell. When this sense of smell vanishes, those things that are known and recognised by their smell or fragrance also lose their relevance and existence; they virtually vanish. Therefore, they virtually set in the nose, or vanish inside it along with its perceptive powers of smell, when the nose is not functioning properly, as when a man catches cold.

The nose and its perception of smell have their value and importance and relevance for the man only till the time they are able to smell things and make a man aware of their existence. The nose instinctively turns towards the things which emanate a sweet fragrance. Hence, they vanish as soon as the perception of smell present in the nose ceases to function.

All forms of smell have 'earth' as their foundation. It is only on the earth that anything 'smells', and this smell can linger for a long time near the surface of earth and not in the sky. [For example, when we enter a garden, we observe that the sweet fragrance of flowers spread everywhere, but if we happen to rise up in the air, say by going up in a hot air balloon above the garden, we would not be able to smell those same flowers. In outer space, there is no sense of smell coming from any direction. Hence, smell is directly related to the earth element. Another proof that smell is related and based on the earth is when we hold a clod of earth close to our nose we get an 'earthy' smell from it. This is evident in a earthen pot when water kept in it acquires a sweet taste and smell. This 'smell' is typical of the earth element, as none of the other elements such as the sky, water, fire and air can have smell if it was not for the involvement of the earth element. Any smell has the footprint of the earth element in it.]

Therefore, those perceptions that pertain to the faculty of smell and perceived by the nose have their base in the earth, and are in existence only till the time earth is

there. Otherwise, they collapse with the earth element; they vanish with the earth element; they dissolve and become one with the earth element.

The Naadi (nerve/vein) called Jita relates directly to the earth element. [That is, this Naadi has a predominance of the earth element in it over other elements. It is activated when it comes in contact with anything having a fraction of the earth element in it. This Naadi controls the olfactory function of smell in the nose and takes the perception known as smell to the brain, enabling the man to smell.] Hence, the earth is invisibly present in this Naadi as its inherent active ingredient, and it vanishes or sets with this Naadi. [That is, when this Naadi stops functioning, it is deemed that it has merged with its earth element, or has collapsed in the earth element.]

The Jita Naadi is directly related to and activated by the vital wind called Vyan. [This wind maintains equilibrium in the body much like the earth which keeps things from being scattered in the sky due to its gravitational pull, and lending density to them.] Hence, it virtually collapses in the Vyan wind, and ceases to have relevance and value, and therefore existence, in the absence of the Vyan wind. [That is, the group of nerves and veins that activate the nose and the faculty of smell are made effective due to the presence of the Vyan wind in the body as much as the earth element. If this wind ceases to function properly then the nose also ceases to function effectively.]

The Vyan wind is one of the five vital winds in the body. It is there and has importance for the body only as long as the consciousness resides in the body, for a dead man has no utility for any wind, vital or not. This consciousness represented by the Atma is self-enlightened and self-illuminated; it is a fount of wisdom and knowledge. The very fact that a man realises the existence, significance and importance, as well as the subtle meaning and finer points of the various entities mentioned in this canto shows that he is enlightened, erudite, learned and wise. This knowledge that he possesses is known as Vigyan. Hence, the Atma is Vigyan personified. [The concept of Vigyan has been explained in verse no. 1 and 2 above.]

When the Atma leaves the body, the Vyan wind, along with all other winds, merges with the main or the lead wind called 'Pran' and leaves the body alongside this Pran. Further, the Vyan wind has any significance and relevance only till the time the body has consciousness thriving in it, for a dead body sans consciousness does not need this Vyan wind.

This awareness of the consciousness gives rise to bliss of self-realisation, and of witnessing and experiencing of the ethereal divinity and eclectic truth about the creation, the Atma and the Brahm. Therefore, it sets also in bliss because realisation of the Truth gives immense happiness and peace to the creature's soul. The soul does not want anything else.

That bliss and happiness collectively called 'Anand', which is found in the 4th state of existence of the consciousness called 'Turiya' when one experiences and witnesses the divine supreme transcendental Being (Brahm), also ends with Turiya. It is the 'final frontier', the ultimate goal that the soul strives to reach. So, when the fount of bliss (Anand) is reached in the Turiya state, nothing more is left to be achieved or acquired. As soon as a man abandons this supreme state of existence and wakes up into this mundane existential material world, he immediately loses that bliss which he was enjoying in the Turiya state. The word Turiya means 'fourth quarter', and once this segment is reached after crossing the first three quarters, there is nothing beyond it and the complete cycle is achieved. There is accomplishment of all that has to be accomplished; there is the 'final coming home, full cycle' for the soul. Everything comes to a full stop.

Being thus enlightened about the truth, the man moves ahead to the next phase called 'Turiya' state of existence. In this state, there is no fear of death, no sorrows, no torments, no sufferings and no perplexities related to this world. It is marked by eternal bliss, peace, tranquility and happiness. In this state the man realises his truthful form, and thus all the causes for his taking birth are rendered null and void. That is, the seed in the form of his unfilled desires and hopes as well as the consequences of his past deeds is made sterile. The 'seed' does not find compatible ground to survive and sprout into new shoots. Therefore, the 'tree' in the form of this world and representing the endless cycle of 'tree-seed-tree' symbolising birth and death is uprooted from its roots for ever.

This final quarter or state of existence called Turiya is marked by glorious virtues, such as of being equivalent to Amrit (the ambrosia of eternity and bliss), of being fearless, of being without any sufferings, pains, sorrows, torments, anguish, grief and distress of any kind, of being eternal, infinite and without an end and limitations, and of being in a state that has no 'seed' or cause from which a person would have to take any birth again. Such a person is called 'Turiya', i.e. one who has crossed the barrier, one who has traveled full circle and has attained final liberation and deliverance. Hence, he attains the supreme transcendental Brahm. [In other words, as has been said above, he comes home after having traveled full circle, and therefore has no need to go over it once again in order to find his home where he would ultimately retire and take his final rest!] [3].

4. Likewise, all the things that make their existence and importance felt because they can be tasted by the tongue have their relevance and importance due to the perception of taste and the faculty that enables the man to taste anything. [A man cannot realise the value of a sweet dish until he actually tastes it. The sweetness is not the object of perception of say the eye or the nose or the ear. It derives its value because of the tongue. In case the man has lost his sense of taste due to any reason, then those things that are valuable because they taste good would be of no importance to the man, and he would not be concerned whether they exist or not.] Therefore, those objects that are related to the sense of taste have their base and root in the tongue, and they lose their importance and value with the loss of the perception of taste residing in the tongue.

The tongue has a tendency to swerve towards delicacies and tasteful objects, and therefore it rests or dwells in those objects; it finds happiness and joy in their company and thoughts; it enjoys tasting them. And as soon as the tongue is deprived of their contact, it yearns for them. In other words, the tongue symbolically 'lives' in the dwelling where the perception of pleasant taste dwells; it likes to be in close proximity of these tasteful things. When these things are removed, the tongue loses its value for the man as far as the perception of tasting is concerned (though the tongue has other function of enabling the man to speak). [When the tongue does not function properly, a man can fill his stomach, but he wouldn't enjoy the food eaten. The satisfaction of a 'tasty' meal is missing, making anything that can fill the stomach equally bland.]

For anything to taste delicious, water or 'Varun' is needed, because it is the water element in the saliva that dissolves the chemicals in the food and helps the taste buds to taste the food, and the nerve dealing with taste to take the perception to the brain so that the man can discern a particular taste in a thing. Hence, taste as well as the perception of taste rely on or depend upon the 'water' element whose patron God is Varun. The taste vanishes the moment Varun disappears.

Varun (water) is the patron deity of the Naadi (nerve/vein) called 'Soumya'. [At the time of creation, the Water God took up residence in the body and moves along this duct.] So, when this Naadi dies or ceases its function, the Varun God (water element) also vanishes from the body. [In practical terms this translates in the inability of the body to taste any food eaten by the mouth, and derive satisfaction of taste from it.]

The Soumya Naadi is directly related to the vital wind called 'Udaan'. [This wind helps the man to rise up and speak. It has a tendency for upward movement. This can be explained when a man 'sits up or stands up to speak'. He has to 'reach out' to acquire anything tasty, and when he eats he 'sits up'. When he eats anything really appealing to him, he even goes long distances to eat it, even when his usual meals are available in his house. If what he eats is tasty, he praises it and would ask for it repeatedly.] Hence, it also merges into the Udaan wind. [That is, when the Udaan wind ceases to function, this Naadi also ceases to function. This is evident when it becomes difficult for a man to eat anything properly while lying down; he has to sit up in order to relish his meals.]

This Udaan has its relevance for the body only as long as the consciousness, the vital life infusing and enabling force known as the Atma, lives in it, for a dead body would have no need for either the Udaan wind or the Naadi that tastes food and keeps the perception of taste functioning properly.

This awareness is called Vigyan. [The concept of Vigyan has been explained in verse no. 1 and 2 above.]

When the conscious Atma leaves the body, the Udaan wind, along with all other winds, merges with the main or the lead wind called 'Pran' and leaves the body alongside this Pran. Further, the Udaan wind has any significance and relevance only till the time the body has consciousness thriving in it, for a dead body sans consciousness does not need this Udaan wind.

This awareness of the consciousness gives rise to bliss of self-realisation, and of witnessing and experiencing of the ethereal divinity and eclectic truth about the creation, the Atma and the Brahm. Therefore, it sets also in bliss because realisation of the Truth gives immense happiness and peace to the creature's soul. The soul does not want anything else.

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his past deeds is made sterile. The 'seed' does not find compatible ground to survive and sprout into new shoots. Therefore, the 'tree' in the form of this world and representing the endless cycle of 'tree-seed-tree' symbolising birth and death is uprooted from its roots for ever.

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5. Those things that relate to the skin and the sense of touch have their relevance and importance only as long as the skin touches and feels them. Otherwise, they vanish and for all practical purposes have no existence for the man. [For example, a blind man uses his perception of touch and feeling to guide him along; without the skin he wouldn't be able to feel and touch. So, if his skin becomes numb due to some cause, say any disease, he feels completely at sea, not knowing what to do. He can cope without his eyes if his skin can feel and touch.]

The skin that has the sense of touch swerves and goes towards all those objects that gives joy and pleasure to the man on their being touched and felt by him. Therefore, the skin and the sense of touch rest primarily in those objects. It is because of the pleasure that this 'touch' provides to a man that he uses the skin to touch that object. [Obviously, no one would like to touch fire, but he would like the soft feel of a flower and the breeze.]

The subtlest 'feeling' that the skin experiences is when it is 'softly touched' by the wind. [This is easy to experience when we 'feel' the cool breeze blowing against our faces and caressing it with its 'soft touch'.] Hence, that sense of touch which originates in the air/wind element ceases with the latter. [As soon as the wind stops to blow, the soothing touch also vanishes; we stop feeling the air though it is eternally present all around us.]

The Naadi (nerve/vein; the duct and channel of the body) named 'Mogha', which controls this particular function in the body, has a direct relation with the wind element called 'Samaan'. [This vital wind helps in equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body and helps in circulation of blood and lymph.] When the Samaan wind ceases to remain active, this Naadi also collapses with it; it ceases to function too. [The skin covers the whole body and the whole surface is sensitive to touch; the entire surface 'feels' and enjoys the warm and reassuring feeling of 'touch and sensation'. Therefore, as soon as the Samaan wind stops taking blood to any part of the skin, it becomes numb, and virtually dies. The Naadi would not be able to carry the perception of touch from the point of touch to the brain. Hence for all practical purposes, this Naadi dies along with the Samaan wind.]

The Samaan wind has importance and relevance because of the consciousness in the body of a man. This consciousness knows how best to use this wind and the faculty of touch of the skin, being wise and clever in such matters. [That is, the Atma, which is most wise, knows what to touch and what not to.] This skill and expertise of

the Atma or consciousness to judge what to touch and how to judiciously use this sense of touch, is called Vigyan. Therefore, that Samaan wind which is put to good use by the application of wisdom and erudition and proper knowledge pertaining to it, ceases to matter when that knowledge or Vigyan is lost. It becomes just like an ordinary wind present outside in the atmosphere which has no particular value for the man. [For example, when a man's skin becomes dead due to some disease, he loses sense of touch there. Then even if he happens to touch abhorable and despicable things, such as faecal matters or muck, he wouldn't be able to know what he has touched. This is tantamount to his Samaan wind and the relevant Naadi called the Mogha being dead. In other words, this Naadi collapses with the sense of touch which the Samaan wind provides by supplying blood to the skin. Conversely, the Samaan wind will lose its significance when the Naadi ceases to function properly, because the skin that loses its perception of touch is deemed to be dead as far as its utility for helping the man to 'feel and sense touch' is concerned. They collapse into one another.]

Meanwhile, this Samaan wind has its relevance for the body only as long as the consciousness, the vital life infusing and enabling force and the Atma, lives in it, for a dead body would have no need for either the Samaan wind or the Naadi that helps in the skin to feel anything.

This awareness is called Vigyan. [The concept of Vigyan has been explained in verse no. 1 and 2 above.]

When the conscious Atma leaves the body, the Samaan wind, along with all other winds, merges with the main or the lead wind called 'Pran' and leaves the body alongside this Pran. Further, the Samaan wind has any significance and relevance only till the time the body has consciousness thriving in it, for a dead body sans consciousness does not need this Samaan wind.

This awareness of the consciousness gives rise to bliss of self-realisation, and of witnessing and experiencing of the ethereal divinity and eclectic truth about the creation, the Atma and the Brahm. Therefore, it sets also in bliss because realisation of the Truth gives immense happiness and peace to the creature's soul. The soul does not want anything else.

That bliss and happiness collectively called 'Anand', which is found in the 4th state of existence of the consciousness called 'Turiya' when one experiences and witnesses the divine supreme transcendental Being (Brahm), also ends with Turiya. It is the 'final frontier', the ultimate goal that the soul strives to reach. So, when the fount of bliss (Anand) is reached in the Turiya state, nothing more is left to be achieved or acquired. As soon as a man abandons this supreme state of existence and wakes up into this mundane existential material world, he immediately loses that bliss which he was enjoying in the Turiya state. The word Turiya means 'fourth quarter', and once this segment is reached after crossing the first three quarters, there is nothing beyond it and the complete cycle is achieved. There is accomplishment of all that has to be accomplished; there is the 'final coming home, full cycle' for the soul. Everything comes to a full stop.

Being thus enlightened about the truth, the man moves ahead to the next phase called 'Turiya' state of existence. In this state, there is no fear of death, no sorrows, no torments, no sufferings and no perplexities pertaining to this world. It is marked by eternal bliss, peace, tranquility and happiness. In this state the man realises his truthful form, and thus all the causes for his taking birth are rendered null and void. That is, the seed in the form of his unfilled desires and hopes as well as the consequences of his past deeds is made sterile. The 'seed' does not find compatible ground to survive

and sprout into new shoots. Therefore, the 'tree' in the form of this world and representing the endless cycle of 'tree-seed-tree' symbolising birth and death is uprooted from its roots for ever.

This final quarter or state of existence called Turiya is marked by glorious virtues, such as of being equivalent to Amrit (the ambrosia of eternity and bliss), of being fearless, of being without any sufferings, pains, sorrows, torments, anguish, grief and distress of any kind, of being eternal, infinite and without an end and limitations, and of being in a state that has no 'seed' or cause from which a person would have to take any birth again. Such a person is called 'Turiya', i.e. one who has crossed the barrier, one who has traveled full circle and has attained final liberation and deliverance. Hence, he attains the supreme transcendental Brahm. [In other words, as has been said above, he comes home after having traveled full circle, and therefore has no need to go over it once again in order to find his home where he would ultimately retire and take his final rest!] [5].

6. The things which are the subject matter of speech or 'Vaak' (the spoken word), or about which a man speaks, have their relevance and importance because they are worthy to be spoken about (as compared to things that are not talked about or should not be talked about, such as evil deeds and secrets). These things of the world about which a man talks about acquire their value because of the faculty of speech. [They become important because they are talked about and discussed and made known to others. Otherwise, they become redundant, unknown and forgotten.] Therefore, they depend upon the faculty of speech for their value and importance; they find their symbolic refuge and shelter in it. Other faculties can use the objects that pertain to their respective functions only because the speech enlightens a man about the presence of those things at a particular place, and tells him how to acquire them and reach them, and their usage, value and significance. [Knowledge is imparted by teaching and preaching, both requiring the speech to enable this to come about. Even if a man is very wise and scholarly, his knowledge would be of no use to others if he is unable to speak and tell others his views. Of course, one may argue that writing his views can help to disseminate information, but that would have a limited reach and scope because firstly only literate people would be able to read his writings, and secondly if they have any quarries, there would be no one to 'answer' them, for 'answering' needs speech and voice. Speech is a vital component of fruitful existence.]

The faculty of speech has importance for a man when it informs him about anything or helps him to address others or express himself. If this purpose is not accomplished, then the speech and the spoken word lose their relevance, value and importance. Therefore, the Vaak or the faculty of speech symbolically sets or rests and merges or collapses into the subject matter talked about. [The focus of speech is the subject that is being talked about, for if a man talks irrelevant things, or talks incoherently, or is unable to articulate his views in clear terms, then though he might be talking a lot and loudly, but it would be better if he had kept quiet. Speech has value as long as it focuses on the subject talked about. This is tantamount to it having its dwelling in that subject; the subject is its focal point from where it derives its importance and significance. This would be clear when we hear a mad man speak. What good is his faculty of speech?]

The Fire God called 'Agni' took up his residence in speech (i.e. in the mouth) at the time of creation. [That is why we refer to someone's 'fiery speech'.] That spoken word, which has the fire element in it, loses its import and value, its

magnificence and brilliance when the fire dies down. [That is, a fiery speech which can ignite passions and reactions and inspire a huge crowd, can even calm down ruffled emotions and nerves by its sweetness, rationality, empathy, sympathy and expression of sincere concern. This calming effect of speech is akin to the fiery element of speech having died down. Further, talking and speaking needs energy which is the metaphor for fire.] Hence, the Vaak or speech rests or lies down when the fire element calms down or subsides. [When a man loses energy, he is unable to speak and talk with anyone.]

The Naadi (nerve/vein) called 'Kumar' has a direct relationship with the fire element. [This is because the Fire God, in the form of the subtle energy present inside the body, moves and flows in this duct.] Hence, the fire element remains imperceptibly present in this Naadi keep it active, and it vanishes inside it. Further, this Naadi, like its other counterparts in the body, has its relevance, utility and importance only till the time the fire element is present in it. [All the different Naadis have the different elements of Nature present in them in varying proportions. The element that dominates over the others in a particular Naadi, the element that is in a predominant state in that Naadi gives it its specialty and importance as well as its relevance to the vital winds and the different perceptions of the creature.]

The Naadi called Kumar enables a man to acquire fame and glory by his spoken words. It also can cause ill will and animosity. Having spent its force (i.e. when a man has finished speaking and rests his voice or takes leave of his audience and gives them time to judge what he has spoken), this Naadi settles down or cools down and finds its refuge and rest in the accompanying honour that a man gets by using his speech which helps him to acquire a good name and fame. On the other hand, it symbolically hides or conceals itself when a man speaks in a hushed tone or keeps quiet if the spoken word can cause acrimonious circumstances or if what he has spoken does not go down well with the audience, because then the same speech that could have given him fame now gives him a bad name.

The vital wind called 'Vairambh' controls the function of speech. It enables a man to speak articulately, coherently and cogently. This gives him good name and fame.

The glory and honour that one acquires by speaking with wisdom and erudition, with a thorough knowledge of the subject spoken about, and speaking with dignity and aplomb, finds its refuge and shelter or base in Vigyan. [That is, if a man speaks with proper knowledge of the subject and relies on verifiable information and sound thinking and logic, then he can stand steadfast even when challenged to prove the facts of what he is speaking about. Such speech that is reliable, truthful, honest, empirical and based on solid foundation and good judgment, and not reliant merely on conjectures and hearsay, is called one based on Vigyan. Even in the case his views create heated temperaments and opposition, he can win over his opponents by his sound logic based on equally sound knowledge, and laced with sweet words. The importance of Vigyan in the realm of speech can never be overstated. Its value can neither be underestimated, because a teacher can teach only if he knows how to speak properly, articulately, coherently and cogently.]

Vigyan is possessed by the conscious Atma (and not by those entities that do not have consciousness in them), and Atma is the only entity that is conscious. It is the Atma present in the body that regulates the faculty of speech through the fire element, the wind element, and the Naadi as mentioned above. The Atma regulates and decides what the faculty of speech would say and not say. This discretionary

ability of the consciousness is called its Vigyan. It is able to use its bank of knowledge to make this judicious decision. This awareness by the man is Vigyan.

This awareness of the consciousness gives rise to bliss of self-realisation, and of witnessing and experiencing of the ethereal divinity and eclectic truth about the creation, the Atma and the Brahm. [This is because he learns about them when a wise and enlightened man speaks on them.] Therefore, it sets also in bliss because realisation of the Truth gives immense happiness and peace to the creature's soul. The soul does not want anything else.

That bliss and happiness collectively called 'Anand', which is found in the 4th state of existence of the consciousness called 'Turiya' when one experiences and witnesses the divine supreme transcendental Being (Brahm), also ends with Turiya. It is the 'final frontier', the ultimate goal that the soul strives to reach. So, when the fount of bliss (Anand) is reached in the Turiya state, nothing more is left to be achieved or acquired. As soon as a man abandons this supreme state of existence and wakes up into this mundane existential material world, he immediately loses that bliss which he was enjoying in the Turiya state. The word Turiya means 'fourth quarter', and once this segment is reached after crossing the first three quarters, there is nothing beyond it and the complete cycle is achieved. There is accomplishment of all that has to be accomplished; there is the 'final coming home, full cycle' for the soul. Everything comes to a full stop.

Being thus enlightened about the truth, the man moves ahead to the next phase called 'Turiya' state of existence. In this state, there is no fear of death, no sorrows, no torments, no sufferings and no perplexities related to this world. It is marked by eternal bliss, peace, tranquility and happiness. In this state the man realises his truthful form, and thus all the causes for his taking birth are rendered null and void. That is, the seed in the form of his unfilled desires and hopes as well as the consequences of his past deeds is made sterile. The 'seed' does not find compatible ground to survive and sprout into new shoots. Therefore, the 'tree' in the form of this world and representing the endless cycle of 'tree-seed-tree' symbolising birth and death is uprooted from its roots for ever.

This final quarter or state of existence called Turiya is marked by glorious virtues, such as of being equivalent to Amrit (the ambrosia of eternity and bliss), of being fearless, of being without any sufferings, pains, sorrows, torments, anguish, grief and distress of any kind, of being eternal, infinite and without an end and limitations, and of being in a state that has no 'seed' or cause from which a person would have to take any birth again. Such a person is called 'Turiya', i.e. one who has crossed the barrier, one who has traveled full circle and has attained final liberation and deliverance. Hence, he attains the supreme transcendental Brahm. [In other words, as has been said above, he comes home after having traveled full circle, and therefore has no need to go over it once again in order to find his home where he would ultimately retire and take his final rest!] [6].

7. That object which the hands wish to receive and hold has its importance and value because the hand finds it worthy to touch and hold it. This object reaches the hand and stays with it. In other words, the hand has a tendency to grasp everything worthy that comes in contact with it; the hand extends to those things that are worth holding and accepting. It is the function of the hand to accept and hold things. The hands have a tendency to move towards those things which should be taken, held and accepted. Hence, those things are its destination; it rests with them; it swerves towards them; it

moves towards them and keeps them with its self by holding them. Once it finds what it wants, it does not wander anywhere else but concentrates on it.

The material object sought by the hand can be of use to any part of the body, and its relevance ends there. [For example, the towel held by the hand is used to wipe the face, and with it, the purpose of holding the towel is served. The hand no longer needs the towel no matter how valuable it is.] These objects sought by the hand are meant to be of use by the patron Gods of the different organs of the body whose chief is Indra¹. [That is, they are literally consumed by Indra representing the combined forces of all the organs of the body. The material objects acquired by the hand are used by the body and its various organs; they are meant for the consumption and good of the entire body.]

This Indra is very fond of Amrit (the sweet ambrosia of eternity and bliss represented by the vitality flowing through the body), so he goes towards that duct that carries a steady flow of Amrit. [The organs derive a great deal of satisfaction from enjoying the pleasures and comforts of the objects taken by the hand and held by it for the benefit of the whole body.] Therefore, Indra virtually retires in that duct that gives satisfaction to him. In other words, Indra likes to dwell and remain submerged in those things that give it pleasure and comfort. [The organs like to enjoy themselves and the hand is their messenger who acquires those things that the organs would need for their own pleasure.]

This Amrita Naadi (duct or nerve/vein) that has the element of pleasure and enjoyment flowing through it (i.e. the nerve in the body that controls the sense of pleasure and enjoyment, and the veins that supply those organs with blood and enables them to perceive the sense of pleasure and satisfaction) moves towards its primary source called 'Mukhya'. Hence, it culminates in the Mukhya; it opens and pours itself in this Mukhya. [The word refers to something that is the chief amongst others. Since the Atma is the chief entity in the body and it resides in the heart of a man, this Amrita Naadi heads towards the heart and ends up opening there. In other words, this Naadi serves the heart and controls its emotional aspects. The Atma is like the emperor even as Indra is like the king of the Gods. These Gods represent the various vital functions of the body and its organs, and their coordinated functioning is represented by their king Indra. Similarly, the Atma is behind the whole apparatus known as the living entity called a 'Jiva', and therefore, whatever the hands acquire and whatever the benefits the body gets out of the objects got for it by the hands are actually and ultimately meant for the service of the Atma. This Atma is symbolically like Indra, but superior to the latter.]

The 'chief', i.e. the Atma, has the propensity of going towards Vigyan; it tends to accept anything that has the predominance of auspiciousness and righteousness, that is good and high, that is the best of the lot and most acceptable of them. That is why it (the Atma as the chief) merges itself with it; it submerges itself in it; it finds peace and solace in all that has Vigyan as their prominent characteristic feature and dominant virtue. [That is, the consciousness present in a man is always auspicious and righteous; it always leads a man towards his betterment and upliftment. In other words, the consciousness would never inspire the hand to catch anything that is not worthy to be accepted by a man; the consciousness acts as a constant guard and prevents a man from using his hands and his heart from either trying to hold anything that is not auspicious and good, or even thinking about it and getting emotionally attached to it.]

Vigyan is possessed by the conscious Atma (and not by those entities that do not have consciousness in them), and Atma is the only entity that is conscious. It is

the Atma present in the body that regulates the faculty of touch. The conscious Atma which is wise and knowledgeable decides what the hand would accept and what not. Like a wise king, it sends the hand towards those things that are useful for the body. This discretionary ability of the consciousness is called its Vigyan. It is able to use its bank of knowledge to make this judicious decision. This awareness by the man is Vigyan.

This awareness of the consciousness gives rise to bliss of self-realisation, and of witnessing and experiencing of the ethereal divinity and eclectic truth about the creation, the Atma and the Brahm. Therefore, it sets also in bliss because realisation of the Truth gives immense happiness and peace to the creature's soul. The soul does not want anything else.

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[Note—¹*Indra* derives his name from 'indri' meaning the sense organs of the body—five organs of perception and five organs of action. The vital functions and the virtues of each of these organs are personified as a God. Since the heart is at the core of life of a man, the central authority that regulates all these Gods is also said to have its seat in the heart. That authority is the emperor of the body and its organs, and it is the Atma. Indra is a metaphor for or a personification of the combined virtues and characteristics that define all these organs and their functioning. The organs have an

intrinsic tendency to move towards pleasing things and away from unpleasant things. Therefore, it is deemed that their messenger, the hand, brings to them only selected and best of things which is like bringing Amrit for their king Indra, because anything that is acquired by the subjects are first offered to the king before the subject can enjoy it. Indra in the present context is the Atma because the latter is the undisputed emperor of the body. According to the Rig Veda, 1/ 4-5; 51-57, Indra represents the combined forces of Nature represented by the different Gods. He loves to drink Som, the elixir of bliss and eternity (Rig Veda, 3/ 36/ 8). He has the Wind God called Marut as his chief assistant. This is a symbolic way of saying that all the vital winds present in the body help the Atma to enjoy the bliss and eternal life to which it is entitled. The contentedness that a man derives from holding in his hands what he desires is like providing Indra, representing the Atma, with Amrit, the elixir which is very dear to him. Since the Amrit is the best extract of all juices in this world, it signifies all that is righteous and auspicious, and therefore is a metaphor for Vigyan, because only a wise man would be able to distinguish between what is good and what is bad, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.]

8. In a similar way, all that which have its importance and value because of the legs, and that which depends upon the legs, find their resting place and refuge in the leg. [For example, if the mind of a person wishes to go to any place, it depends upon the legs to carry the body there. The different pilgrim sites have their importance for the man because the legs can carry him there. Similarly, if the hand wishes to take anything, it depends upon the legs to take the body to that thing so that the hand can accept the thing. If the excretory organs wish to relieve themselves, they have to go to the toilet, but it is the leg that would take them there. If the tongue wishes to taste any delicious eatable, it is the leg that carries the body to where the delicacy is located. In other words, all the other organs depend upon the leg to help them accomplish their objectives. The legs serve them all selflessly. In each of these cases, they depend upon and take the refuge of the leg; they virtually surrender before it.]

The legs go to the desired destination, and then they rest. That destination becomes the final resting place of the legs. [This is evident when, once having reached his destination, a man feels so tired that he does not wish to move anywhere else. This is a symbolic way of saying that the legs have taken their rest.]

The best destination for a man is where Lord Vishnu is¹. Vishnu is the 'truthful Supreme Being' as he is a personification of the supreme Brahman, so what emerges from truthfulness is also truthful. Therefore the Naadi (nerve/vein; the duct in the body) which helps the legs to carry out its functions and takes it to its truthful destination is called 'Satya' which literally means 'the truthful one'. Symbolically, all that is an auspicious destination where the legs go, and all that is represented by Lord Vishnu, end up in this Naadi. [That is, all the righteous and auspicious places where the legs go themselves and take the other organs to, are dependent upon this Naadi, because it is this Naadi that enables the legs to take the body there. The proper functioning of this particular Naadi decides whether or not a man would reach his destination. The success of the legs to carry out their function efficiently depends upon this Naadi. When any part of the body wishes to go anywhere, it would have to ultimately depend upon this Naadi to enable the leg to carry the body there. So they symbolically find their resting place in it because they don't have to go anywhere else for movement. In other words, Vishnu, who stands for all truthfulness, virtuousness and auspiciousness in this creation, also finds his resting place in this Naadi.]

Since all the veins and nerves of the body are controlled by the consciousness present in the creature, and all of them serve this supreme entity without which they

will have no relevance, this Naadi also serves the consciousness present as the Atma residing inside the bosom of the man. When it reaches its destination (i.e. when it reaches the Atma in the heart) it symbolically rests there (or ends there).

The supreme, all knowing, omniscient Being residing inside the body of the man, (i.e. his Atma which is a representative of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being), has a propensity to move towards all that is wise, enlightened and auspicious, collectively Vigyan. [That is, the natural tendency of any man is to go towards good things as opposed to bad things. The sub-conscious always tells the man that where he is going is good or bad for him, which he likes to call the 'sixth sense'. It is the 'inner voice' present in a man that is being referred to here. This inner voice is the voice of his Atma or consciousness.] This entity is known as 'Vigyan' because it acquires all the characteristics of Vigyan².

Being thus enlightened about the truth, the man moves ahead to the next phase called 'Turiya' state of existence. In this state, there is no fear of death, no sorrows, no torments, no sufferings and no perplexities pertaining to this world. It is marked by eternal bliss, peace, tranquility and happiness. In this state the man realises his truthful form, and thus all the causes for his taking birth are rendered null and void. That is, the seed in the form of his unfilled desires and hopes as well as the consequences of his past deeds is made sterile. The 'seed' does not find compatible ground to survive and sprout into new shoots. Therefore, the 'tree' in the form of this world and representing the endless cycle of 'tree-seed-tree' symbolising birth and death is uprooted from its roots for ever.]

[Note—¹The best destination for the leg is where the supreme transcendental Lord resides. This is a metaphoric way of saying that instead of going to places that are considered bad, lowly and unworthy, which are spiritually demoting and denigrating for the creature, and which are generally considered notorious for their un-holiness, the legs should prefer to go to those places that are uplifting and regenerative for the soul of the creature. Lord Vishnu is the sustainer and the care-taker of the world. He is the most important of the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma, the creator, and Shiva, the concluder. It's easy to produce and destroy, but a mammoth task to sustain and nourish what has been born. Lord Vishnu is also depicted as the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of the creation from whose body the rest of the creation is said to have been formed; the Viraat embodies the whole creation in his own self. According to Purans, even Brahma and Shiva have been created from Vishnu. His name first appears in the Rig Veda, 1/154-156. The Lord represents all that is virtuous, noble, righteous, auspicious, high and glorious in this creation. He is all pervading, all encompassing and omnipresent. He is a personification of Yagya, or the various religious sacrifices (Shatpath Brahmin, 1/1/2/13). The Lord has taken numerous forms and revealed himself on different occasions to uphold good and righteous, and trounce bad and evil. Lord Vishnu is also depicted as a synonymous deity for Brahm; he is Brahm personified. And that is why Vishnu is the truthful abode for the soul, and truthful destination where the legs symbolically should take the soul of the creature. The pathway is the Naadi called Satya.

²Vigyan- It is called Vigyan because it is self-sustained, self-enlightened, self-illuminated, radiant and glorious; it is a fount of knowledge and awareness, of wisdom and enlightenment. All other entities in this creation have whatever they have because of the potentials and powers bestowed to them by this consciousness. Their very relevance and importance and significance are there because the consciousness has given them this privilege. These entities are nothing else but a marvelous display of the magnificent majesty and potentials of the consciousness. This realisation is called Vigyan because it is based on intelligent application of knowledge and wisdom. It is Vigyan because it is empirical and thoughtful; it is rational and logical;

it is truthful and real. Vigyan refers to a superior body knowledge that is not based on hearsay or conjectures. It has a solid foundation and steady relevance.

Consciousness itself refers to the truthful awareness and knowledge of anything that is real and true, and not that is hypothetical and imaginary. That is why the Atma or soul is called consciousness and a personification of Vigyan.]

9. Those things that are meant for elimination by the man (i.e. that thing which is unwanted and unworthy to be kept with the body in which the Atma resides) head towards the anus. Anus is their natural habitat. [That is, those people who are evil minded and pervert, move towards lowly things that are abhorable and not worthy to be accepted by noble souls. They have a propensity for such things and such environs. It is their natural habitat. They need to be avoided and expelled from an auspicious society.]

The anus has a tendency to accept only disposable and lowly things that are poisonous for the body; those things that are gross, useless, unworthy and worth abandoning go to the anus. [Just like the garbage bin in the household.]

The faecal matter represents those parts of food from which all valuable and essential things or nourishments have been extracted. This residue in the anus is the 'dead' aspect of the vital life-sustaining and most important component of creation, the 'food'. It therefore represents the 'dead' aspect and is a metaphor for it. Anus and its contents become synonymous with death.

This 'death' aspect of life, i.e. the powers of the body to extract valuable things and collect the unwanted residue in the anus until it is eliminated, is made possible by the Naadi (nerve/vein) called 'Madhyama'. Hence, they symbolically find their refuge and shelter in this Naadi. [In other words, the formation of faecal matter and its elimination by the anus depends upon this Naadi. Therefore, they rest with it; they rely upon it; they depend upon it; they carry on their function only till the time this Naadi functions properly. They seek its blessing and refuge in order to be able to do their designated duty.]

The entire process of formation of stool and its movement towards the anus and its final elimination from the body depends upon the vital wind called 'Pravanjan'. [In other words, this Naadi can function only if this vital wind functions properly. Otherwise, the anus would lose its capability to satisfactorily eliminate stool. The Naadi is kept activated by this wind, so if this wind malfunctions, the anus also malfunctions. Perhaps this is the reason why certain people face problems of constipation.]

It is the pure consciousness that governs the vital wind called Pravanjan (besides the Naadi and the anus). It is the consciousness that becomes aware of the necessity of the body to eliminate stool from it, and it is the consciousness that wisely carries out this function. [The stool continuously accumulates in the anus, but the man's sub-conscious regulates its elimination at regular intervals; the man does not have to go to the toilet ever now and then, or sit there continuously for the whole day to keep the anus clean and empty. On the other hand, if the body is overloaded with unwanted food, the consciousness immediately orders the anus to eliminate the excessive load, and the man has to rush to the toilet. The man feels the pressure and urgency of this vital wind called Pravanjan which activates the anus by activating the Madhyama Naadi.]

Therefore, the power of knowledge, or the 'Vigyan' aspect present in the consciousness is the subtle and most important factor that controls all these entities. All these entities, such as the Pravanjan wind etc. have their symbolic refuge in the

Vigyan because they depend on this factor of consciousness to carry out their own functions. Hence, they rest or set in Vigyan. [When a man becomes unconscious, he may pass stool involuntarily and unwillingly. This is because his 'Vigyan' has lost control over the Pravanjan wind that controls the Naadi and the anus.]

When stool is satisfactorily eliminated, a man feels contented. This is akin to the state of Turiya as described in earlier verses. This lends him fearlessness, calmness and peace of mind. [This is very obvious. When a man has attended to the nature's call, he feels very relieved and happy. On the contrary, if he has to go somewhere with the stool pressing down his anus, one can imagine his distress and the horrible time that he has. He feels restless and agitated, unable to concentrate and do any work. He may even die if the stool is not allowed to pass for a long time.]

Since Turiya state is marked by peace and bliss, elimination of stool and getting rid of the unwanted faecal matter from the anus is also akin to attaining the Turiya state of existence.] [9].

[Note—A wise man picks and chooses what he should accept and what not from the myriad options available to him in this world. He does not take anything given to him if it does not appeal to his wisdom, if it is not auspicious and righteous for him even if it's free, because he treats it as poisonous for his Atma and his spiritual well-being. From all the things finally taken, he should imbibe or extract the best and discard the rest like the food is eaten and then the body extracts its nutrients and discards the rest as residual matter in the form of stool. In spiritual terms it implies that a man should concentrate on the essence of all things of this world and judges for himself what is good for his spiritual health, what is the truth and immortal thing that would give him peace and tranquility, bliss and happiness. After all, it is for one's happiness that one strives and makes all the efforts, and if this purpose is not served, then everything goes in vain. This he should keep for himself and the rest is to be discarded as faecal matter. A man who literally extracts what is auspicious and righteous for providing him spiritual nourishment and uses it for his spiritual enhancement is considered a wise man, while those who keep themselves attached to the grosser aspects of this world are symbolically courting death. The metaphor of the anus is to indicate that such stupid men would have to take birth and enter a womb once again where they would be surrounded by the waste of the mother's body.

This logic can be extended to apply to all the verses of this canto. A man should accept by his hands only that is auspicious and righteous; he should go to those places that are conducive to his spiritual well-being; he should see, hear and speak what is spiritually good and uplifting for him; he should eat what is sanctioned and good not only for his body but also for his spirit; he should think and contemplate upon those things that are spiritually uplifting for him.]

10. That which has a propensity to go towards the genital or be attracted by the genitals, finds its rest in the genitals. The genitals find pleasure in those things that help to gratify its innate lust and passions. Hence, the genitals rest with those things. Therefore, the genitals submerge themselves in obtaining bliss and ecstasy, and virtually drown themselves in it. [That is, those people who always think of sexual pleasures and lust for sexual gratification, find rest when they reach such things; otherwise they are restless and agitated. The genital organs yearn for sexual pleasures and they get their satisfaction from indulging in passions and related subjects, so they always swerve towards those things that can provide them with such pleasure and gratification. Once they reach their destination, they find their rest. They wish to remain there.]

The pleasure derived by the genitals has creation as its accompaniment, so the creator Prajapati Brahma is its patron God and it goes to him. [That is, the pleasure derived by the genitals is offered to Brahma as an offering to its patron deity.]

When the Prajapati accepts the offering, he moves towards the Naadi called 'Naasira'. He subtly enters that Naadi (duct or cord) and moves in it. [The word 'Nasa' (pronounced as *nus* as in *bus*) refers to a vein or a nerve; hence Naasira is the nerve that gives the sense of sexual pleasure to the genitals, and the relevant vein supplies it with blood and stamina to effectively perform its functions. The male spermatic cord and the female fallopian tube come under its ambit. Once the genitals have finished enjoying sex, the process of creation starts, and the patron God of creation, Prajapati Brahma, who has already entered this Naadi, makes conception fruitful, and then nourishes the embryo that results from the pleasures of the genitals. In other words, it is the vitality and consciousness that is present in this Naadi as Prajapati Brahma that enables the genitals not only to enjoy sex but also to initiate the process of creation.]

The Naasira Naadi is activated and energised by the vital wind called 'Kurma'. [This wind opens up the aperture of the sexual organs. It helps the movement of sperms and enables the man to feel a high of sexual satisfaction that attends ejaculation.] Therefore, the entire function of the Naadi depends upon this Kurma wind; hence it rests with it. [That is, when this wind fails to function, the entire sexual process and procreation takes a beating; it fails.]

This Kurmi wind is activated by the consciousness present in the man; it is the wisdom and intellect that tells a man when to and when not to involve himself in sexual activity. It also enlightens him that the sexual process is a divine function in order to carry forward the process of creation in a perpetual manner so that the cycle of creation does not stop. So, being holy and divine in nature, it should not be used to satisfy one's carnal desires. That would be a horrible sin. This erudition and knowledge is Vigyan. Therefore, the Kurma wind symbolically looks up to this Vigyan and literally rests with it. In other words, the Vigyan decides when to have sexual activity and when to conceive, and then it gives necessary instructions to this wind to activate the Naasira Naadi which in turn activates the genitals. A wise man and woman use their wisdom and knowledge in the field of sex also. This is called use of Vigyan by them.

The immense sense of pleasure and satisfaction that is derived due to sex done in a holistic manner, and with a clear conscious that it is not any kind of indulgence but a divine mandate and a divine, religiously sanctioned symbolic sacrifice, leads the man to state of great bliss and contentedness that is known as Turiya. This state is obtained in the 4th state of consciousness when there is complete bliss, peace and tranquility. This is only possible when sex is treated as a holy activity and not mere physical enjoyment of the organ.

With this knowledge and assurance, the entire exercise makes a man fearless; he becomes free from the mortal fear of death (because he is assured that he has done a religious thing and the resultant offspring would make him immortal by carrying forward the name of the family and the good works done by its father; there is no sense of guilt in the parents). He becomes free from all sorrows and guilt, from all torments and anguish (that he is doing something that is not worthy to be talked in public, as if he has committed a horrible sin!). He derives immortal bliss which comes with doing something that is adorable and sanctioned by religion. This state leads him to a state when all his 'seeds' of passions and lust and desires for sexual gratification are annihilated, because now he is allowing the genitals to perform a divine task.

Therefore, this is akin to attaining the state of Turiya that is generally obtained as a result of Samadhi. [10].

11. That which goes towards the Mana (the heart and mind; the emotions and thoughts) or is attracted by the Mana, rests with the Mana. The Mana has a tendency to swerve towards things (subjects) that attract it, and therefore it rests with it. [A man who depends upon his emotions and compulsive thoughts rather than his discriminatory intellect and wisdom delves in those subjects that appeal to these entities. He would decide a matter compulsively and emotionally rather than on its merits and rationale and intelligent application of mind.] Therefore, the Mana rests with those subjects in which it finds interest. It goes to those things and subjects that require its attention, and then rests with them. It wouldn't like to move away from them unless it has satisfied itself. [The mind would always like to think about those things that seem attractive to it, notwithstanding their desirability and worthiness.]

Since the patron deity of the Mana is the Moon God, the Mana therefore turns towards its patron God. [The Moon controls the sentimental heart and the emotive mind. That is why a sentimental man becomes 'emotional' when the moon is full, and there are so many mental diseases that have a direct link to the phase of the moon.] Therefore, the Mana virtually rests with the Moon; it depends upon the Moon. [An emotional lover would like to spend his nights lying under the Moon's light, wide awake and lost in his thoughts. This is not the case with a rational man who would rather spend his time sleeping properly and waking up rejuvenated to face the toil of the day that follows.]

The Moon goes towards the Naadi called 'Sishu' and it virtually dissolves itself in it. The Moon, that controls the emotions of a man, is subtly present in this Naadi and gives it its special characteristic. It is the Moon present in this Naadi that makes a man so sentimental and emotional. In other words, the Moon dissolves in this Naadi; this Naadi is rich with the emotional factor synonymous with emotions and sentiments. [The word 'Sishu' means a child. The symbolism is quite obvious—a person who is subservient to his emotions and sentiments, and allows them to have the better of him, is indeed like a child; he is compulsive and thoughtless at times and does not realise that what he thinks to do or acquire, or the subject on which he is so obsessively possessed, is not conducive to his long term good. This Naadi arouses the 'child' factor in even a grown up man.]

The vital wind called 'Shyen' controls the functioning of the Mana through this Naadi; this vital wind acts in tandem with this Naadi. Hence this Naadi rests with it. In other words, it is this wind that makes a man more sentimental and emotional; it is the overactive Shyen wind that defines a man's character as being emotional and sentimental. This Naadi is hyperactive in a man whose Shyen wind is very active. This wind called Shyen is like a hawk (because the word itself means a hawk) for it inspires the mind and the heart to swoop upon its object of thought much like a hawk which swoops upon its prey and catches it in its claws. But the wise consciousness inherently present in a living organism helps it to decide what to and what not to think and contemplate about even as the hawk's mind tells it which is its prey and from what it must protect itself. This erudition and wisdom that tells a man to think about proper things that are positive, righteous and auspicious, and not those things that are negative, denigrating and inauspicious for him, is called Vigyan. This Vigyan helps the man to attain joys and happiness that are accoutrements of judicious thinking and application of discriminatory mind. Hence, Vigyan leads him to bliss and peace, to happiness and joy, to contentedness and a sense of fulfillment. It is this bliss and

fulfillment towards which Vigyan leads the mind of a wise man. Since these are the characteristics of the Turiya state of consciousness, it is deemed that the Mana has enabled a man to reach the state of Turiya when he becomes eternally fearless, peaceful, and without any worries and sufferings. Such a man has virtually burnt all his 'seeds' of worldly desires, and consequentially has attained permanent and eternal beatitude and felicity. [11].

[Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous—Confucius.]

12. In a similar vein, that which depends upon the 'Buddhi', or the intellect, wisdom, erudition and discriminatory faculty of the brain, finds its resting place in it. [In other words, those people who rely upon their intellect for all their decisions blindly depend upon it; they have faith upon the intellect and take its refuge or shelter or help to guide them. They do what their intellect tells them to do.]

The Buddhi has an inherent tendency to go towards those things that are worthy for it to think about; it guides a man towards those things that are beneficial for him, and warns him against those things that are harmful for him. It shuns those things that are not intelligently acceptable and proper for the welfare of the man. [This is different from the way the Mana works—it makes a man emotional, while Buddhi makes a man rational and intelligent. When Buddhi dominates, the man would weigh all the pros and cons before taking a decision, while when Mana dominates, the man would be driven by his emotions and sentiments.] The Buddhi plunges headlong into things that appeal to it (i.e. the intelligence keeps the man busy in intellectual pursuits). It literally drowns in such activities, and the man forgets about everything else. In other words, it 'dissolves' the man in such subjects that require application of intellect because the man loses his independence and becomes tied to those subjects; he would like to spend as much time as he has in pursuit of such intellectual activities—he gets 'lost' in it, he is submerged in it.

Therefore, the Buddhi virtually gets lost in intellectual subjects and those things that need the application of the intelligent mind. [For example, when an intelligent man finds a good book, he forgets even about his meals and other worldly matters, while a stupid man would throw the same book and would prefer to spend his time idling away or remaining in bad company.]

Since subjects that inspire the intellect are of a higher plain (such as the Vedas and the Upanishads which need a razor sharp brain to understand them), their patron God is Brahma because he had created the Vedas. Brahma is considered the wisest being in the whole of creation because the Vedas were pronounced by him and the rest of the body of knowledge is governed by these Vedas, therefore the Buddhi has a natural tendency to go towards its patron deity, the Brahma, to seek his blessings and patronage. Because it looks up to Brahma for his help, it symbolically takes refuge with him; it finds rest with him. [When the intellect has praised its Lord and has relied upon the scriptural texts he prescribed for wisdom and enlightenment, the Buddhi is deemed to have found its last refuge in as much as it has not to go anywhere else to seek better and further guidance and advice. It rests with Brahma. Further, when wisdom is subject to in-discriminatory attack by foolish people and has to bear the brunt of onslaught by non-believers, it seeks shelter with its patron God, the creator Brahm from whom the entire body of knowledge had emerged at the time of creation.]

The Naadi (nerve/vein/duct of the body through which vital impulses pass that controls the functioning of the intelligent mind) named 'Surya' (literally meaning the

Sun) is the duct in the body through which the Brahma subtly operates. Brahma injects vitality and consciousness in this Naadi. [That is, the faculty of reasoning and intellect is kept in prime working order by this Naadi. It supplies the part of the brain that is concerned with rationality, logic, discrimination and intelligence with blood and nourishment, and takes the information that the other sense organs gather from the outside world to the brain so that it can make intelligent, rational and wise decisions. So by symbolically remaining present in this Naadi, the wise Brahma provides the necessary stimulus to it, and through it to the brain that thinks intelligently. This Naadi is called Surya because the Sun is a metaphor for wisdom, knowledge, erudition and enlightenment. Its bright light is synonymous with knowledge and erudition.] Therefore, Brahma symbolically dissolves or takes rest or finds his refuge in the Surya Naadi which is the most suitable habitat for the wise Brahma.

The Surya Naadi goes towards 'Krishna' and vanishes into it or is absorbed by it. [The word 'Krishna' means something that is dark. The symbolism is very obvious. The Surya Naadi has intelligence flowing through it, and it goes towards all that is dark in order to shine its light over it and help it to get rid of its darkness representing ignorance. In other words, the wisdom that a man possesses can help him to remove the darkness of other men with whom he comes in contact. Even as the Sun automatically lightens up the realm and eliminates the darkness of night when it emerges in the morning, communion with such wise men is inherently good for the creature. The sun travels across the sky and heads to the west to move ahead and plunge in the dark side of the sky (or the dark half of the earth) in order to illuminate it. The sunset is symbolic of this continuous effort of the sun. Likewise, wise men always endeavour to remove darkness of ignorance and delusions from their mental landscape.]

Once all darkness or the 'Krishna' aspects of a man's character is removed, the man is bestowed with Vigyan. That is, once ignorance and delusions are eliminated, the man becomes enlightened and wise, which are the characteristic features of Vigyan as well as the sun. Only an intelligent man can judiciously use his mind and intellect; he symbolically dissolves his Krishna in Vigyan. The light of the 'Sun' (Surya Naadi) eliminates the darkness called 'Krishna'.

When enlightenment dawns upon a man, he attains bliss and happiness that are the hallmarks of the Turiya state of consciousness. In other words, he is deemed to have reached that Turiya state which makes him fearless and without any consternation; he becomes peaceful and contented; he has no fear of death (because he has realised that the Atma or the soul is eternal and it is his truthful identity, thereby making him immortal); he has no more sufferings and sorrows to torment him (because these are the functions of the gross body and not the Atma or soul).

For all practical purposes, such a man has become 'seedless' in the sense that all his desires have been exhausted and he does not have to take birth again in order to fulfill his remaining yet un-fulfilled desires. Besides, wisdom entails that he has realised that his deeds are not done by him but his body, and therefore there is no cause for him to take birth again in order to suffer or enjoy the results of the deeds. [12].

13. That which has a propensity to accept Ahankar¹ (the negative qualities of pride, ego, haughtiness, arrogance etc.), becomes submerged in Ahankar. [That is, those people who have these negative traits in them remain submerged in their sense of ego

and pride, which in turn makes them haughty and arrogant. They lose their positive qualities of humility and moderation.]

The sense of pride and ego virtually takes over a man's independence, and he is driven to doing things that he would have otherwise avoided doing just in order to serve his sense of pride and ego. He would not allow himself to face the prospect of having to face a situation when the people would say that he couldn't do such and such thing. It hurts him not to live up to his reputation of a man who has always said 'I can do it', or 'I have such powers, authority and ability'. He is forced to do his assigned duties and live up to his responsibility because otherwise he feels ashamed of himself; the man feels that he is junior and less competent than the others; he feels 'failed and impotent'; he gets into a depressive mood and feels dejected and despaired. This mood has a negative effect on his general well being. Hence, this factor of 'Ahankar' merges with and becomes inseparable from the 'sense of duty and responsibility' (called 'Kartabya').

The efforts to successfully achieve one's goals without any opposition from anyone are absolutely impossible in natural surroundings. All things don't happen according to a man's hopes and aspirations; or in spite of his best efforts he fails to accomplish the desired results. This generates frayed tempers and he feels frustrated, distressed and dismayed because his sense of ego and pride has been hurt. So this generates anger and ill will, jealousy and envy, hatred and animosity. These are metaphors for 'Rudra', the patron God of these qualities.

The Naadi (vein/nerve) called 'Asura' feeds this factor of Ahankar. [That is, the part of the brain that controls the notions defined as ego and pride which makes a man haughty and arrogant, and the anger and frustration that accrues when ego is not satisfied, is served by a particular nerve called Asura. The word means 'that which has a preponderance of demonic forces; that which has the negative traits such as ego and pride as well as anger and haughtiness as a dominant quality'. Hence, this Naadi is so called because it feeds these qualities in a man. In other words, Ahankar propels a man to become an Asura (demon-like). He is also overcome with all the characters that are collectively labeled as Rudra.] Therefore, the patron God of such negative qualities, Rudra, is symbolically and subtly present in this Naadi. [That is, this Naadi excites and nourishes anger and vehemence in a man. If this Naadi dominates over other Naadis, then the man would be predominantly characterised by anger and like qualities.]

This Asura Naadi is activated by the vital wind called 'Shwet'. Therefore, it depends upon this wind for its activities and life; it virtually rests with this wind. [In other words, when the Shwet wind remains calm, a man does not feel angry and vehement; he does not have the sense of false ego and pride.]

This vital wind is under the command of 'Vigyan'. In other words, a man's wisdom is able to exercise control over his sense of ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness, and consequentially over his anger and wrath. When the conscious life factor that is present in a man decides, he becomes proud and angry. The man's wisdom and intellect tells him that his self respect and dignity is being hurt and eroded by a given set of circumstances, and this makes him angry. It is his wisdom that tells him when to become angry and when it is the better part of discretion to keep quiet, for it is not advisable to become angry when the circumstances are not favourable. A truly wise man would rarely if ever become subservient to Ahankar and Rudra. Therefore, this vital wind called Shwet finds its rest and refuge in Vigyan. This vital wind depends upon Vigyan to either be active or remain silent and dormant.

When wisdom and rational thinking have the upper hand in a man's life, he would never become angry or haughty; he would shun such negative qualities as having ego and false pride; he would avoid becoming arrogant and too obsessed with his duties and responsibilities to such an extent that they would make him exhibit these negative characters. Consequentially, he would find peace and tranquility; he would find bliss and happiness that comes with remaining calm and having no enemies, no jealousy, no hatred and no animosity with anyone. This is akin to the Turiya state of consciousness when there is equanimity and peace everywhere.

In such a state, the man becomes fearless from death; he has no sufferings, pains, torments, sorrows and anguish; he becomes peaceful and tranquil; he attains a state of blissfulness and felicity.

With all his negative characteristics exhausted, he becomes like that 'seed' that has lost its regenerative powers. In other words, such negative traits never sprout in his bosom again. [13].

[Note—¹*Ahankar* refers to the notion of ego, false self assertion, vanity, boastfulness, self-righteousness, arrogance, haughtiness and pride etc.

The concept that 'I' is the body and not the 'pure conscious soul' leads to ignorance-based ego (*Ahankar*). The constant concept of I vis-à-vis the body and this world leads to the sense of possessiveness in the creature. 'Pure consciousness' mired by ego becomes 'a conditioned consciousness' and fails to remain pure. This is why ego (*Ahankar*) has been likened to a minister of the king. It directs and regulates the actions of the consciousness which, under its influence, loses its independence. This 'conditioned consciousness'—working through the mind-intellect-ego combine is called, inter-alia, 'Chitta'. The word also means memory. Hence this memory acts as a referral library for the intellect. The latter falls back on it and rely on it whenever it is in doubt. The quality of books in the library guides the student; similarly, the quality of inherent tendencies stored in the library of Chitta directly affects the inputs of the intellect, and through it, the mind and successively down the hierarchy to the body and its organs of perception and action.

Although the soul has nothing to do with this command chain involving Chitta (sub-conscious and memory)—Vrittis (inherent tendencies and inclinations, nature and temperament) and Vasanas (passions and desires)—Buddhi (intellect)—Mana (emotions and notions, the emotive thoughts)—Sharir (body)—Karma (action and deeds)—the result of deeds and actions—more experience—stored in memory—and the chain continues, but for all practical purposes the Atma/soul is deemed responsible for it because of its sovereign nature.

So, the sincere seeker/aspirant should delineate this conscious from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through like the splendorous sun breaking through from behind a curtain of clouds.

It is like removing the various veils or covers from around the candle so that its light shines through the darkness of the room and illuminates all the corners of it.

Example of a sleeping man-- *Ahankar* is generally associated with the body when the creature thinks that he has so many achievements to his credit and that he has achieved them with his body. He erroneously begins to have a notion of possessiveness and belonging to this world; he starts to conjure up imaginary relations that have their relevance only as long as there is the body, for once a man dies these relations snap even without notice, and even in the case the ignorant Atma wished to retain

them it cannot because the same son and wife whom he loved so much are eager to get rid of the dead body which is causing pollution in the household! So, when a man snuffs out Ahankar from his mental radar, he becomes as indifferent and dispassionate as a sleeping man who is unconcerned with the external world.

For example, if the house is on fire, a sleeping man wouldn't be bothered at all as long as he is asleep because he is totally disassociated with the house. He does not bother because he is not attached with his 'possession'; a sleeping man just cannot think that the house that he had built on his own strength and effort is getting destroyed. But once he gains consciousness, he is struck with grief and dismay. Similarly, when a wise man realises that the world is not related to him, and his true identity is his Atma and not the body, then he isn't bothered either with the body or the world with which the body is related and the various relations that exist only because of the existence of the body. The Atma has no relationships whatsoever. Absence of Ahankar eliminates all these at one go.

For all practical purposes, a wise man is as good as asleep as far as the external world is concerned. Even as a sleeping person forgets all about the outside world because his sense of belonging to and identification with the world, of calling the world mine and your, of having love or hatred, of having attachment or detachment, of having animosity/enmity or endearment and friendship, of having happiness or grief—all such emotions are literally 'asleep' with him. Similarly, a person who does not have Ahankar is freed from such emotions that are directly related with his sense of involvement with the world through the medium of the body, though he appears to be awake and active in this world.

The Atma or soul is pure and these things have got nothing to do with it. But because there is the false belief that the creature is the gross body and not the pure consciousness and pure self which is called the soul or Atma, all the external actions done by the body appears to have been done by the creature which, in fact, is an erroneous conclusion. [Refer Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kanda, canto 12, verse no.19.]

How Ahankar effects a creature has been elaborately described in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, in its Uttar Kand, canto 6, verse no.41-52. Let us examine what it says:--“ (verse no.40-41)-- Sage Valmiki said, 'Listen! I shall tell you in brief all the forms of shackles/fetters tying the creatures to the world and the ways to achieve emancipation and salvation through self-realisation. After listening carefully to what I says (40), you should act accordingly. This will give you all round welfare and you shall be freed from this illusionary, so-called worldly life. This gross physical body is the home of the body-less (i.e. formless and featureless, attributeless and characteristic-less), conscious and pure Atma (soul).

(Verse no.42-44)--The soul or Atma has made Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness) his minister (advisor). This 'Ahankar' factor pertains to the body in which the Atma resides; the creature is proud of his body and its achievements, it is attached to the body and the things that are achievements of the body.

And since Ahankar is the advisor of the Atma or soul, it uses its closeness, influence and association with the latter to mislead it into believing that its (Atma's) real identity is not formless and pure consciousness but the inert and gross body because the body has given the creature its independent and individual identity. As a result, all the

efforts done by the Ahankar through the medium of the body (both the gross as well as the subtle) appear to be done by the Atma because of this basic misconception and impersonation.

The Jiva or the living creature (i.e. the 'Atma or a soul with the body'), begins to be erroneously identified with the body. This living creature, who is under the dominance and spell of Ahankar, is inspired and impelled by it; it does what its advisor advises. As a result of which it gets tied by shackles/fetters representing various 'Sankalps' (resolves, solemn promises and vows, determinations; resolution to fulfill one's wishes, desires, volitions and ambitions) that he makes. As a consequence, he (the creature) spends his days and nights thinking about his sons, women, home etc. (because all these have been acquired by him with his body and he is 'proud' of his accomplishments and possessions. He does not want to let go of them because his 'ego' wouldn't let him do so; he clings to them and dies for them).

(Verse no.45-47)--Making vows and promises, showing determinations and having resolutions, dogged pursuit of and having yearnings to have desires fulfilled—all these result in setting into motion a cycle causing innumerable sufferings and pains, sorrows and anguish for the creature.

This Ahankar has three types of bodies, viz.—the best, the mediocre and the base, depending upon the type of Sankalp it makes. These Sankalps are of three types depending upon the three types of Gunas or qualities, characteristics and virtues called Sata, Raja and Tama respectively that the creature has¹. These three types of bodies are the causes that make the world exist in the form it does. [That is, the world is characterised by the presence of these three Guans or characteristics in different permutations and combinations resulting in myriad variations in the nature, temperament, outlook, mental caliber etc. of the creature].

Out of these three, those creatures who have an excess proportion/ratio/share of the Tamas (most lowly) characters (i.e. those who have negative characters in far greater abundance or in a predominant proportion as compared to the other two characteristics) are engrossed in doing corresponding lowly and pervert deeds driven by these forces of character. As a result, the creature gets tainted by negative characteristics and submerged in negativity. The result is his entering a womb (or taking birth) in the form of insects and worms (representing the lowest rung in the evolutionary ladder which here represents the spiritual evolution of the creature).

Those who have the first and the most superior characteristic of Satwa as a predominant trait, pursue the path of righteousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct (called the path of Dharma), as well as inculcates wisdom and truthful knowledge (called Gyan).

¹The three types of characteristics are the inherent virtues and qualities present in a creature that determines its mental temperament and nature, and thereby it's all round existence in the world. There are the following:--(a) Satwa—this corresponds to those positive virtues and qualities that are marked by creativity, purity, holiness and nobility; (b) Raj—these are medium in nature and correspond to such qualities as worldly passions, ambitions and desires; and (c) Tamas—these lowly virtues create dullness, inactiveness, indolence, inertia and perversions.] (Verse no.48-50)-- As a result, they live happily and contentedly in the realm of emancipation and salvation. [That is, they live a successful life as expected of a creature by the scriptures, and when they die, they get liberation from the fetters of this body and get deliverance.]

Those with Rajas characteristics in abundance remain attracted and tied to the world of women, son etc. (i.e. he becomes a worldly man).

Oh the wise and noble one! Those persons who forsake all the three types of Guna-induced actions and deeds in this world (i.e. they refrain themselves from pursuing any object in this world by the force of natural impulse, or are driven by the inherent tendency created by the above three Gunas), have their intellect and mind under their tight leash (control), and as a result, they obtain the most exalted state of oneness with the Parmatma who is the supreme transcendental Soul.

Therefore you must leave aside worries and thoughts of all kinds, and instead endeavour to exercise control over your mind using the discriminatory powers of your of the intellect (i.e. through wisdom, erudition and truthful knowledge, you must overcome doubts and perplexities, and become tranquil and calm).

(Verse no.51-52)--After you do so (as in verse no. 50) you must crush (vanquish or eliminate) all your desires and inclinations, both external (relating to the surrounding world) as well as internal (relating to the mind-intellect complex). Oh Anagh (i.e. the pure, sinless and faultless one)! Even if you do severe penances and austerities, and suffer hardships and adopt all possible means for thousands of years while staying anywhere, either in the subterranean world, the terrestrial world or the heavenly world, you do not have any other course (remedy, method or a way out) to break the fetter that shackles you to this world consisting of birth and death, except by destroying your inherent tendencies, inclinations, desires, yearnings, ambitions and false determinations”.

Ahankar and Trishna go hand in hand. Trishna for worldly gains inspires a man to make greater efforts to fulfill his desire and achieve success in acquiring the objects of his desire. Once successful, it fills him with pride of success and the pride of having acquired something which he had got out of his own strength and intelligence. Besides this, only a person who is able can even think of acquiring any object of comfort in the world which is rare for his compatriots to have. For instance, only a rich man can hope to acquire, say, a costly gadget which is beyond the reach of an ordinary man. So the very fact that he wants that gadget shows that he has a hidden pride in him that he has the capability, the financial prowess and the wherewithal to acquire it. There is a subtle, concealed ‘Ahankar’ hidden in him that he can do such and such thing, he can acquire and enjoy such and such thing, and he is capable of doing it. It is ‘Ahankar’ that propels him to show the world that he is superior in knowledge, wisdom, scholarship, powers, strength, wealth and prosperity. This ‘Trishna’ for one-up-man-ship is directly proportionate to his ‘Ahankar’.

To illustrate how a veil of ‘Ahankar’ makes the otherwise flawless, faultless, immaculate and supreme Soul become identified with this adjective used to define it, let us take the example of any professional. Suppose a man is an expert doctor or a lawyer. No one knows he is a doctor or a lawyer in an alien place or even at his work place in a hospital or a court if he does not don the requisite paraphernalia, e.g. a stethoscope around his neck and a doctor’s white robe on his body as a doctor, or a black robe as a lawyer. When he does so, then immediately the people start calling him as a doctor or a lawyer. Now, if he is wise, he will go about his duties in a professional way, but stupid people will become haughty and arrogant, throwing their weight around to impress

and influence others for personal gain though in their specific fields or vocations they may not be up to the required professional mark.]

14. That which swerves towards 'Chitta' melts in it; it dwells in Chitta and remains engrossed and submerged in it. [The faculty of Chitta and its powers are called 'Chitta Shakti'—it is the faculty of reasoning and thought; the conscious intellect; the powers of discrimination, understanding, paying attention, memorizing, and the ability to recollect and store information that are characteristics of the conscious powers exhibited by the mind and intellect apparatus; the sub-conscious and memory; the ability to concentrate and focus the mind on anything. (The concept has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 5; Sanayso-panishad, canto 2, verse no.42-46).]

In other words, when a man finds anything enduringly attractive and interesting, he spends his time always thinking about it. That subject occupies his mind and intellect so much so that he forgets about anything else. His sub-conscious dwells perpetually on that subject and he remains engrossed in it. It is like being submerged in Chitta.

The Chitta on the other hand has a natural tendency to go towards those things that interest it or those that conform to its needs. Therefore, the Chitta delves in and rests with those things that interest it; it perpetually dwells in those subjects. When the Chitta finds anything that is worth contemplating and deeply pondering about, it remains engrossed and drowned in it. Each subject which interests the Chitta has its own dominion and specific area of operation. Therefore, the Chitta symbolically rests with and depends upon the patron deity of that field in which it is interested. This deity personifies that particular field of knowledge and skills, and this deity is called a 'Kshetrageya'.

This Kshetrageya moves along the Naadi called 'Bhaswati'. In other words, this particular Naadi (vein/nerve) controls that part of the brain that makes a man contemplative and thoughtful, and it helps him to concentrate on his chosen subject, to store information in his sub-conscious and remember it when required, thereby controlling the memory, and to think about those things that are worthy of thought. The consciousness present in this Naadi is the subtle form of this deity.

The functioning of this Naadi is subtly controlled by the vital wind called 'Naag'. This wind stimulates this Naadi to remain activate. So it depends on this wind for its functioning and rests with it. In other words, as long as this wind functions properly, the man's Chitta also functions properly, and as soon as this wind ceases to remain active, the man loses his powers to concentrate, remember and recollect anything. He is unable to focus his mind on any subject even if he attempts to do so.

This Naag wind is controlled by the wisdom and intellect that is inherent in a man. It is the rational mind that decides what is to be remembered, what is to be thought, what needs attention and concentration of mind, and what is worthy of paying any attention and thought at all in the first place. This selective aspect of the discriminatory intellect is called Vigyan. Therefore symbolically, this vital wind rests with Vigyan; it finds its refuge in Vigyan; it is driven by Vigyan; it relies on Vigyan.

When a man is able to focus his Chitta judiciously and on proper subjects, he gets immense satisfaction and elation. He feels that he has done the right thing. This gives him peace and tranquility; it provides him bliss and a sense of contentedness that comes with wise application of one's mind and intellect. These virtues are the characteristics of the 4th state of consciousness called Turiya. It leads a man to feel

fearless from death and all sorts of consternations. It makes him free from all types of sufferings, sorrows and anguish; it endows him with perpetual bliss and joy.

This Turiya state of existence is compared to a 'seed' that has lost its regenerative powers because the man's concentration has been focused on the higher echelons of spiritualism, and he has attained that state wherein he remains perpetually submerged in contemplation and meditation. He never thinks of mundane affairs of the world that tie an ordinary creature to this world of artificiality and delusions. [14].

15. Any wise man who becomes wisened about that fundamental essence which has no 'seed', i.e. the pure conscious Atma that remains in an eternal state of Turiya (as described above), becomes 'seedless' himself. In other words, he also acquires those qualities that characterize the Atma. [In fact, the realisation makes a man come to acknowledge that his true identity is the Atma and not the body that exhibits all the qualities described in this canto.] Therefore, he too, like his principal form, the Atma, becomes eternal, without a birth, without death, without any fears and consternations, and without any delusions. His composure and steadfastness, his conviction and faith cannot be violated and corrupted. Since he is not the gross body therefore he cannot be burnt and destroyed (by the scorching fire of the funeral pile which roasts and burns other ordinary people by its ferocity). He remains unwavering and calm even during the greatest of mental and emotional upheavals that would unhinge other ordinary mortals. He does not lose his calm and never becomes angry and wrathful.

The term 'being seedless' refers to the state where all regenerative powers have been lost because without seed no new tree grows. It is a metaphor that implies that a wise man who has reached the Turiya state of existence of consciousness has no worldly desires left in him, and so his mind is at complete rest and at peace with itself. Since it is the mind and its desires that are the basis of creation of this world, with their 'rest', the world also 'rests' or ceases to exist.

In short, this Atma has such stupendous potentials that it can annihilate all negativity and demoting qualities present in a creature, and instead enhance all that is positive and auspicious for it—this is the considered view of those who are experts in the essence of the scriptures. [15].

16. The supreme, eclectic and unique entity known as the Atma cannot be understood or grasped by thousands of lectures, it cannot be comprehended by studying voluminous scriptures, and it cannot be either attained by the combined efforts of the intellect and the mind. Similarly, it cannot be achieved by scholarship, erudition and learning; it cannot be found by delving in the Vedas, by doing fire sacrifices, by severe penances and austerities, by study of philosophy called Sankhya Shastra, by Yoga (meditation), by rigidly following the tenets of the various Ashrams (the four divisions in which the life of a man has been divided—viz. Brahmacharya, Grishastha, Vaanprastha and Sanyas), or by any other means.

It can be attained or realised by those who have the following characteristics—(a) who have unwavering and steady faith, conviction and belief in the supreme and transcendental Brahm, (b) who listen to praiseworthy spiritual discourses in which the glories of Brahm are being lauded and expounded to enable them to become aware of the essential truth and reality, (c) who rise above the mundane and ordinary way of thinking and outlooks, and think of higher matters, or who set their sights to nobler targets rather than on the humdrum, (d) who attentively listen to learned Brahmins who expound on those scriptures that are spiritually enhancing and which throw light on the supreme reality, (e) who, having heard these 'truths', become naturally

enlightened and steadfast in such noble virtues as being eternally calm and tranquil, being tolerant and fortitudinous, having equanimity and forbearance, having total sense of renunciation, detachment, dispassion and indifference to all things that are perishable, entrapping and deluding for the soul, (f) who have inculcated patience and endurance, and (g) who undergoes sufferance with good cheer.

A person who is highly enlightened, who has reached the higher echelons of spiritualism, who has successfully inculcated the grand virtues enumerated above, and who has attained a transcendental state of existence, remains in a state of perpetual Samadhi (a trance like state when the creature loses awareness of all things pertaining to the external material world, and instead remains submerged in the bliss obtained by concentrating upon the fount of eternity called the Atma). In such a state he is able to realise and come face to face with the Atma. He sees Atma with the light of self realisation and enlightenment. Only such a man is eligible and competent to attain and receive the supreme essence of the Atma. In fact, those who realise the truth about the Atma become universal in their outlook. They see the same Atma everywhere in this world, because the Atma is universal and all pervading; it is omnipresent and all encompassing. [16].

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Canto 10.

[This Canto outlines the various worlds that came into being. They are visualised as consisting of concentric circles, or as layers stacked one on the top of the other.]

1. The next question asked by Raikwa was this—‘Oh Lord! What is that on which everything else rests, or which is the habitat of ordinary creatures? Or in other words, which is that foundation that supports the rest of the mortal creation?’

Sage Ghorangiras replied, ‘To start with, everything finds its support and foundation in the world called ‘Rasatal’’. [The word refers to the core of the earth. It is also used as a metaphor for something condemned and dumped to a lower grade of existence; a place marked by sin and low moral standards. Here it refers to the mortal world inhabited by sinful and pervert creature living underground in earth, those who shy away from the limelight because of their sinful reputation. That is why we say a criminal has ‘gone underground to avoid arrest’.]

Raikwa asked, ‘Where is Rasatal established (or, where is it located)?’

Ghorangiras answered, ‘It is based on the Loka (world) called ‘Bhu’’. [This word refers to the earth where all the creatures live.]

Raikwa asked, ‘Where is Bhu Loka established (or, where is it located)?’

Ghorangiras replied, ‘It is established upon the ‘Bhuvaha’ Loka’. [This word refers to the sky above the surface of the earth and extending upto the outer fringes of the atmosphere.]

Raikwa asked again, ‘Where is Bhuvaha located?’

Ghorangiras answered, ‘It is located within the ‘Swaha’ Loka’. [This is the heaven. It refers to the space beyond the Bhuvaha Loka, and in the realm of the solar system.]

Raikwa asked, ‘Where is Swaha Loka found or located?’

Ghorangiras replied, ‘It is located in the ‘Mahar’ Loka’. [The word means ‘great or large’, and it refers to the greater world or the outer space beyond the solar system. It is believed that great sages and seers live there. It is like saying ‘the greater

London or Delhi' area. It lies outside the heaven and is like the outer areas or outer suburbs of a great city which has expanded beyond its original limits. Sages and seers live here because of relative peace and serenity as comparative to the heaven where there is hustle and bustle of festive life enjoyed by souls who manage to go there as a reward of their leading a good life on the earth.]

Raikwa persisted with his enquiry, 'Where is this Mahar Loka established?'

Ghorangiras answered, 'It is established in the next Loka called 'Janaha' Loka'. [This place is the one where, according to mythology, Brahma the creator created the first human named Manu. The word 'Janaha' literally refers to generation of something new; to create; to produce and reproduce.]

Raikwa asked, 'Where is Janaha Loka established?'

Ghorangiras replied, 'It is located in the 'Tapa' Loka'. [This word refers to austerities and penances as well as sufferance. It is the place where Brahma had done severe penances and austerity to empower himself to initiate the process of creation. Mystics and ascetics are said to inhabit it. It is said to be six crore Yojans (1 crore = 10 million; 1 Yojans = appx. 8 miles) higher than or above the Janaha Loka.]

Raikwa asked again, 'Where is Tapa Loka established?'

Sage Ghorangiras replied to him, 'It is located in the next higher world called the 'Satya' Loka'. [This is the 'truthful' world where the superior Gods live. It is where Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of creation, also lives, because Vishnu is treated as being synonymous with the Viraat Purush who is the macrocosmic Lord from whom even the creator of the visible world, Brahma, was born. This world has the legendary ocean of milk called the Khsirsagar upon which Lord Vishnu reclines on the bed made of coiled python known as Shesh Nath. It is the truthful or 'higher heaven' and shines with the brilliance of one thousand Suns shining simultaneously. It is located about thirty crore Yojans (i.e. roughly 2400 million miles above the Tapa Loka.)

Raikwa asked once again, 'Upon what is this Satya Loka based; or where is it located?'

Ghorangiras replied, 'It is based upon the 'Prajapati' Loka'. [This is the divine abode of Prajapati Brahma, the creator.]

Raikwa persisted with his enquiry, 'Where is Prajapati Loka found?'

Ghorangiras answered, 'It is established in the 'Brahm' Loka'. [This is the highest strata of creation and forms its outer fringe or circumference or boundary. It is the mythological abode of the unmanifest and imperceptible, the supreme and transcendental Brahm. In a symbolic way it is the 'great cosmic womb' which conceived, created, nourished, harboured and eventually produced this magnificent and fantastically varied creation in all its beauty, complexity and diversity. It is here that Brahm conceived the very first sign of life in the form of Hiranyagarbh, the golden embryo of the cosmos. From it developed the Viraat Purush, and from the latter evolved the rest of visible and the invisible creation. Out of them, the lowest forms who were the grossest in symbolic terms of spiritual development lived in the Rasatal, the more evolved and less gross ones in the Bhu Loka, and the still better ones who were 'lighter' in a metaphoric way found their abode in the sky or the Bhuvaha Loka, and so on and so forth. The Rasatal represents the foot of the Viraat Purush who is the first macrocosmic gross body of the supreme Brahm, and has many of the characteristics of Brahm, such as being invisible, being all-encompassing and all-pervading, and being the one from whom the rest of the world was born in the very beginning. The Brahm Loka is his symbolic head.]

Raikwa asked finally, 'Like all other Lokas, this Brahm Loka must also have some base or location; it must be surely resting on some place. What is that?'

Sage Ghorangiras proclaimed, ‘Well, there is nothing beyond it really. All other Lokas can be visualised as beads threaded together in a rosary that is known as ‘Brahm Loka’. This Brahm Loka symbolises the circumference of the Universe; it is the outer periphery. The various Lokas are held together in place by this single unifying thread called ‘Brahm’ or Atma. If this thread or cord is broken, all the beads representing symbolically the various Lokas would scatter and roll away. The very existence of the symbolic rosary representing the systematic arrangement and functioning of the various worlds, compositely called the universe or cosmos, would be jeopardized if the binding ‘thread’ is cut. This so-called thread is not seen from the outside of the rosary; we see the beads and the shape of the rosary. But any intelligent man can guess that there must be something that is holding those individual beads together and give them the shape known as a rosary. It is obvious and clear that the foundation upon which the entire structure of the rosary (or garland or necklace etc.) is based is not the bead but the thread or cord that holds them together and gives the rosary the necessary shape, and therefore its importance as an instrument used during religious ceremonies, prayers, and for doing Japa (repetition of the Mantras); if the beads are not threaded together, they would lose their importance and significance. The thread passes through the center of the beads; it is invisible but the most important factor for the very existence of the rosary. Therefore, it is the thread or the cord that holds the beads together in the shape of the rosary which is the unifying factor for the beads and the most important component of the rosary. Similarly and by the same analogy, this Atma representing Brahm is the underlying unifying factor that is the only important aspect that holds the various worlds together; it is the only factor that gives the worlds their shape, importance and relevance. Indeed, it is the Atma that makes the very existence of the worlds possible; otherwise they would scatter and roll away in the fathomless bowl of the sky. Further, the individual piece of thread that is found in a particular rosary is like the individual Atma of a creature, while the entire reel of thread is like the Brahm which provides the endless thread to keep the entire cosmos bound together; Brahm keeps it unified and shaped! (1).

[Note—The various *Lokas* mentioned here have been described in Brahmaand Puran (BP) and Vaaman Puran (VP) as follows:--‘Bhu’ (भूः) or earth [BP-3,4,2-18]; ‘Bhuvaha’ (भुवः) or the space between the earth and the heaven [BP-3,4,2-19]; ‘Swaha’ (स्वः) or the heavens known as Brahma’s abode; the space beyond the earth’s atmosphere; cosmic wind represented by the solar wind blows here [BP-3,4,2-20]; ‘Maha’ (महः) or the world created by Brahma pronouncing the divine word Maha meaning the great heaven or the outer space; it is believed that great sages and seers stay here; it is 1000 Yojans or appx. 8000 miles away from the Swaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-21; VP-52,21-22]; ‘Janaha’ (जनः), so called because it was to be inhabited by the humans and the cows [BP-3,4,2-22; VP-52, 22]; ‘Tapaha’ (तपः) or the Loka where great amount of austerity and penances are done; it is said to be 60 million Yojans or appx. 60 x 8 million miles away from the Janaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-24; VP-52, 23]; and ‘Satyam’ (सत्यम्) or the truthful heaven where the supreme Lord has his abode; it is 300 million Yojans or appx. 300 x 8 million miles beyond the Tapaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-25; VP-52, 24].

According to Upanishadic philosophy, the seven Lokas are the seven organs of perception situated in the region of the head —viz. the two eyes + two ears + two nostrils + one tongue/mouth = seven.

It should be noted that this 'thread' is like the forces of gravity that keep not only the things present on the surface of the earth in place and prevent their flying off into the sky, but also rein in the planets and force them to revolve round the sun at fixed distances. It is a miracle of Nature that gravity can hold such far flung planets in place along with their own cluster of satellites. Similarly, there are other forces in Nature that keep each single unit of the cosmos in its place, right from the comets, asteroids and stars etc. to the uncountable number of galaxies and black holes in the cosmos. This inexplicable and incomprehensible majestic and astounding force in Nature is Brahm personified. Can anyone see it? Certainly not. But, can anyone deny its presence? Again, emphatically not.]

2. The person who remains firmly rooted or established in the conviction of the greatness, magnificence, importance and stupendity of the Atma (which is the representative of the supreme Brahm as the underlying truthful essence) of the different Lokas, becomes one like the Atma himself. That is, he becomes wise and learned as the omniscient Brahm whose representative or image the Atma is; he becomes as important and acquires the same significance for those around him and the world at large as the Atma has for the individual creature.

Indeed, a wise person is one who peeps inside and tries to decipher the underlying secret to understand the fundamental truth behind the external façade of this basically deluding material world of artificiality. He does not allow himself to be taken for a ride by the glittering colours of the fascinating world. He develops the power of insight which helps him to penetrate through the veil of darkness representing ignorance which hides the real truth from him. He 'sees' that which is beyond the range of physical eyes as is evident from the fact that he is able to 'know' what lies thousands of miles away from earth in the realm of the higher heavens. This transcendental knowledge would enable him to realise the fact that whatever is there in this creation has one common denominator, and that is the Atma. [The illustration of the common thread passing through the beads of the rosary in verse no.1 of this canto above should be borne in mind here.]

He realises that his own Atma, which is his pure consciousness, and the Atma of the rest of the creation is not only one and the same but is also the same common factor which binds him to the rest of creation. This is the easiest realisation of Brahm, because now the spiritual seeker sees no distinction between himself and Brahm who pervades the entire creation as its unifying Atma which lends life and consciousness to it.

This indeed is true liberation from the fetters of ignorance that shackle a creature to this attractive world, and deludes him to think that one person is his enemy and the other is his friend. This is indeed true deliverance from the trap of ignorance that ties one to this falsehood represented by the world of duality. This is indeed the teaching of the Vedas; this is their tenet; this is the axiom and maxim proclaimed by the Vedic canons (2).

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Canto 11.

[This Canto describes what happens upon death of a living being. Refer also to Canto 15 in the context of this Canto.]

1. The great sage Raikwa asked once again, ‘Oh Lord! When this pure consciousness (Atma)—which is deemed to be a fount of light and wisdom, and which is self enlightened—goes out from the body, which is the place or site inside the body that it abandons, and what is the route or path that it takes to come out of the body?’

Sage Ghorangiras began his narration. He said, ‘In the center of the heart is a lump of red tissue. Inside it is a very microscopic subtle Lotus which is pristine white in colour like the lily flower that blooms under the light of the full moon. [See also canto 4, verse no.1.] That microscopic, atomic and subtle divine Lotus has bloomed to its prime glory. In the core of this Lotus is an ocean (endless fount) of ambrosia. Embedded in this subtle ocean is a closed shell called the ‘Kosh’, which literally means a treasury, a repository, a strong-room, or an inner chamber.

Four Naadis (channels or ducts) open out from it. They are named (i) Rama, (ii) Arama, (iii) Ichha, and (iv) Apunarbhava. Out of these, the Ram Naadi takes the creature to the abode where those who do righteous and auspicious deeds go. The Arama Naadi has the opposite function—viz. it takes the creature where those who do unrighteous and inauspicious deeds go. The Ichha Naadi helps to gain access to those things that a person desires, and it helps him to acquire them. The Apunarbhava Naadi helps in opening the hitherto closed Kosha (shell or treasury) present at the very core of the heart. [Refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 5/10-11.]

When this Kosha opens, it leads to the way that goes right up to the top of the head where the micro fine slit-opening in the skull, called the Brahm Randhra, is located. [According to the Yoga philosophy, this is the place where the supreme Brahm had entered the body at the time of creation. The skull has a micro fine suture where the two halves are joined together, and it is at this point they can be split open and separated.] This opening or slit can split open much like an oyster shell. When it is opened, the next to be pierced by the outgoing Atma of the creature (at the time of its escape from the body at the time of death) is the ‘earth’ element, followed by the ‘water’ element. [That is, when the Atma wishes to escape from the body, it first opens the cocoon of the heart where it is comfortably ensconced. It then moves up in one of the micro fine ducts in the body, called the Naadi, up to the top of the head. The suture here then splits open, and the very fine and imperceptible furrow that is created as a result allows the Atma to emerge out. The ‘earth’ and the ‘water’ elements here refer to the skin and the mucous layers through which the Atma has to pass before it finally emerges out from the body.]

After this, the Atma pierces through the ‘Tej’ element which is the natural tendency of the body to forcefully and energetically exert itself to prevent this most important entity from escaping from the body. [The Atma is riding piggy-back on the vital wind called the Pran on its outward journey. The Atma and Pran are so alike that they are usually treated as being synonymous with each other. Since the Pran is the very life of the body, when it attempts to leave it, the body makes a last ditch attempt to stop it, for the body would be dead without the Pran residing in it. Refer Brihad Aranyaka Upahishad, 1/3/2-27 and 6/1/7-14; and Chandogya Upanishad, 5/1/1-5/1/15

in this context. That is why, at the last moment, a man shows convulsions, throws his arms, gasps for breath, breathes heavily as if making a great effort at something, his eyes start rolling wildly, and then when he fails in his endeavour he finally slumps into a lifeless limp body. This situation of the body in which it energetically and forcefully uses all its might to try to restrain the Atma from escaping is symbolically described here as ‘rupturing of the Tej element’ by the Atma. It is akin to overcoming the resistance by an overwhelming force of Nature which tries to keep the Atma trapped inside the artificial and perishable body of the creature. All the vital forces of the body try their best to prevent the Atma from abandoning the body and thereby rendering it worthless.]

The next hurdle overcome or pierced through by the Atma is the ‘air or wind’ element. [The reason is, the atmospheric pressure as well as the pull of gravity of the earth element from which the body is mainly constituted, try to prevent the Atma from moving upward towards the higher and lighter sky representing the heaven. It requires a tremendous effort on part of the Atma to overcome all these resistances. This situation is akin to a space rocket going up in the sky. See note.]

Then the Atma has to progressively pierce through and overcome the stiff resistance offered by the ‘Akash or the sky’ element (i.e. the open space outside the body of the dead man), the Mana (the subtle form of the mind and heart which do not like to leave this attractive world with its charms and comforts), the Ahankar (the subtle form of ego, pride, vanity and arrogance which comes in the way because the man thinks that he had always boasted of his strength and powers, of his everlasting tenure, and now he is unable to prevent his own death simply because this Atma seems hell-bent to leave the body and won’t obey him, as it were), the Mahattatwa (the subtle forms of such characters as the feeling of importance, significance, majesty, lordliness, grandeur, greatness etc.—all of which are based on the quality called Ahankar and they aid the latter as its comrade-in-arm to try to prevent the Atma from escaping from the body and thereby negate all the previous efforts made by the dying man to establish his majesty and impose his authority over the realm that he had been lording over throughout his life in his haughtiness and vanity as if he would control it forever), the Prakriti (the subtle forms of the various inherent tendencies, temperaments and habits that form an integral character of any creature; these tend to bind the dying man to this material world and his worldly possessions because it has become natural for the man to yearn for and enjoy material comforts and pleasures of the world, and this is only possible if the body is retained, and therefore when the Atma tries to break free from the shackle, the habit of the man to remain ever engrossed in the world makes him very reluctant to leave it, thereby causing the Atma to strain to overcome this hurdle), the Akshar (the subtle forms of the letter, called Akshar in Sanskrit, of any word representing the sound barrier. The sound is the subtlest of the five elements and the nearest to Brahm. So when the Atma breaks through this barrier, it is able to find itself in proximity of Brahm), and finally Mrityu or ‘death’ itself (because when the Atma reaches the supreme eternal and imperishable Brahm, it would have conquered death by the virtue of its merger with the entity that has no beginning or end, i.e. Brahm). Hence, this physical ‘death’ of the body is actually bestowing eternity to the Atma, and death creates the conducive situation whereby the Atma becomes one with the supreme entity known as Brahm. [It’s the chance given to the Atma to break free from the fetters that had been shackling it down to the body and the world. So, if the self-realised person forsakes all his emotional attachments with and longings for the body as well as the material world at the time of death, he dies peacefully. Otherwise, he feels immensely

distressed as if lacerated. It is the latter situation when his Atma (soul) would have to come back, but not in the earlier case.]

When this happens, nothing is left behind and nothing matters. After this stage, there is no such thing as 'Sata' (truth) or 'Asat' (falsehood), or even 'Sada Sat' (that which is an irrevocable and irrefutable truth; that which is the universal truth). [That is, when the Atma has merged with the supreme Truth of this creation in the form of Brahm, no trace of it is left behind to discuss what the truth is and what is the non-truth or falsehood. This discussion is relevant only till the time the ultimate Truth is not found; after that achievement everything becomes irrelevant.]

This is the mystical and esoteric path of liberation and deliverance, of emancipation and salvation, collectively called 'Nirvan'. This is the tenet of the Vedas; this is their teaching; this is the axiom and maxim enshrined in their canons (1).

[Note—1. The path followed by a creature's true self, i.e. its Atma, upon its death have elaborately described earlier in canto 2, verse no.4 as well as in canto 14, verse no.1, and canto 15, verse no.1 of this Upanishad. It has been also described in two other major Upanishads, e.g. Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 3/2/11—13, 3/9/28, 5/10, 5/11 and 6/2/1—16 which is chapter no. 2 of this volume, Kaushitaki Brahman Upanishad, 1/2-6 of the Rig Veda, and in Chandogya Upanishad, 5/3/1—5/10/10 of the Sam Veda tradition published separately as chapter 2 of the relevant volume in this series.

2. Canto 1, verse no.4 establishes that 'death' was created by the creator Brahma even before he created the rest of creatures of the creation. The efforts made by the Atma to 'launch' itself from the unopened Lotus symbolically located in the heart of the man, pass through different barriers to finally reach and land at its destination which is known as the ultimate Truth and the supreme Brahm can be compared to the launch of a space ship from earth. Every modern man knows that an immense amount of energy needed to at the time of its launch, the dense plume of smoke it emits resembling the puffing and panting of the man who feels suffocated at the time of death, the numerous physical forces of Nature that the spacecraft has to overcome in order to escape from the earth's gravitational pull, then its journey onwards to another heavenly body, and finally how the vehicle lands there by piercing through the formidable atmosphere of the unknown place. Throughout its journey into space, the craft is subject to immense pressure of uncertainty, and once it lands on its target, it is lost for eternity. But there is celebration on earth for this epoch-making journey. Almost the same thing applies to the Atma. When it reaches its destination, the supreme Brahm who is as enigmatic and unknown as the remote planet where the spaceship lands, it finds its final resting place which is far away from the hustle and bustle of the worldly life on earth. Since the Atma would never come back to this body again, it is akin to the spacecraft that has been lost for good on the far away planet. But this achievement is the culmination of a long search for Truth, and a wise creature should rejoice at it instead of fretting and fuming at the prospect of death, because without death the Atma would not be freed of this shackle in the shape of the body.

With the analogy of the space ship, it is easy to visualise the journey of the Atma. The 'launch pad' is the Lotus of the heart. The energy needed for the launch and the rest of the journey is provided by the Pran which is the life-injecting vital wind in the body much like rocket fuel, and the ignition is provided by the 'fire element' present inside the body. The technology needed is provided by the spiritual and metaphysical knowledge contained in the Vedas and explained by the erudite teacher in the form of the Upanishads. The software needed to actually implement all the knowledge is the mind-intellect of the creature. The steering and navigating is done by the wisdom and

enlightenment that helps the creature overcome all hurdles as and when they come its way.

Once launched, the 'rocket' escapes the earth's atmosphere into the gravity-less and sound-less outer space or sky. Similarly, the Atma pierces through the Brahm Randhra in the head, the earth element (the gravitational pull), the water element (the clouds, storm, atmospheric moisture etc.), the Tej element (the searing heat of launch and the friction of air which heats the space rocket immensely), the wind element (resistance of air and the different layers of the atmosphere that has to be crossed, and the solar wind and other cosmic radiations that buffet the spacecraft during its journey), and the endless realm of the Akash (represented by the deep dark space of the solar system through which the spacecraft silently moves once it crosses the initial hurdles near the earth). This phase is the so-called 'the earthly' part of its long journey.

Now comes the celestial phase of its journey. All the elements the Atma faces after passing through the sky or Akash are subtle in nature and relate to the environment of the next destination, called Brahm, of this symbolic spacecraft called the Atma. Ahankar, Mahattwa, Prakriti and Akshar constitute the immediate environ of this Brahm. Finally, the spacecraft called the Atma 'lands' on the surface of Brahm after a long and arduous journey. It is the end of its journey. Even as the spacecraft that has landed on an alien planet cannot come back to earth, this Atma also does not have to bother to come back to earth to face the problems of humdrum life. It finds rest and peace. The material world has also lost that Atma like space ship for ever, and does not bother for it much long. This realisation should fill the seeker with profound renunciation because the world for which it had been suffering and hankering throughout its life loses interest in it as soon as it is dead and gone. Say then, what is the purpose served in wasting time in pursuing the world which is so selfish as to use the creature as its rocket to enhance its own control and authority over the cosmos, if that was at all possible for the world! And when the objective is served, it dumps the creature like that space ship on the distant planet that stops sending signals.

The 'death' of the body is actually the 'liberation' of the Atma. The debate and discussion and the necessity to find out whether a thing is true or false lasts only till the time a person has not ascertained it, and only till the time he has to deal with the world because he is not certain whether he is being taken for a ride or not. But once the necessity for such doubting is eliminated, the creature doesn't, and shouldn't, bother about it. Refer also to Cantos 14 and 15.]

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Canto 12.

[The importance of food is highlighted in this Canto. It also describes the category of food that ought to be eaten.]

1. OM salutations! 'Anna' or food needed to sustain and nourish the creation brought into being by Narayan (Lord Vishnu, the Viraat Purush), was also produced by Narayan. This food needed to be cooked. During the pre-creation period, called the 'Maha-samvartak', it was cooked in the Loka or abode where Brahm (the supreme transcendental Being from whom the whole creation, including Lord Narayan, has evolved) lived. It is called Brahm Loka. (See also canto 10, verse no.1)

When the creation gradually came into being, the celestial bodies were formed. The cosmic furnace was the cauldron known as the Sun. So the next phase of cooking was done here in the Sun.

The food which was pre-cooked as described above, was then transferred to the world of living creatures. It was subjected to another round of symbolic cooking when it passed through the various stages of preparation before it was made eatable and digestible by the living creature (represented by the human race and the animals). This was the third stage of cooking called 'Krabya'.

When such pre-cooked food was actually eaten by the creature, the fourth cooking was done in its intestines or stomach. Therefore, this food has been cooked many times over and has become stale, fermented and virtually polluted!

That is why a renunciate hermit or a reclusive ascetic should not eat that food which is stale and polluted because it is akin to eating something that has been cooked the fourth time in the stomach as described above—it is turned into a slushy gruel of a hotchpotch of ingredients which have lost their individuality and taste. [It resembles the excreta that are ejected through the anus after the food is cooked for the fourth time in the intestines of the creature.] The food turns into faecal matter which is of no further use to anyone.

[So what kind of food should an ascetic eat? The answer is--] He should eat sanctified food (i.e. the food that has been cleanly prepared, offered to the Gods first and then a part of it is kept aside especially to be given to the ascetic as a noble gesture and a religious deed. Even this food should not be asked for by a wise ascetic, he should not demand this or that, but should accept such food that is offered to him voluntarily and with due respect by a noble and righteous householder. It should not be taken from a pre-determined household, and it should be begged for at random, i.e. it should not be demanded or ordered by using the threat of a curse, and neither should it be taken from one house more than once because this would create a subtle amount of obligation and attachment towards the family which offers the food, a situation which a wise ascetic should abhor. It would also be tantamount to polluting the food taken. In fact, the food accepted by a hermit or ascetic should have an element of humility and the sanctity of food that is offered to Gods. [That is, the food accepted by him should be offered by the householder with the thought that he is worshipping the Gods and offering oblations to them when he gives any food to the ascetic or hermit. There should not be any hint of charity or doing any kind of favour upon the ascetic or hermit because the food offered to Gods is not charity but a religious duty. It requires humility, piety and purity of mind both for the one who offers the food as well as the ascetic who accepts the food.] A renunciate ascetic should not plead for food like a hungry, famished beggar, but only beg with dignity and self esteem befitting his high stature (1).

[Note—See also Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1/5/1—3 in this context of the food. Upanishads dealing with the concept of Sanyas (a renunciate way of life of a hermit or an ascetic) describe in detail the type of food that is to be accepted and eaten by such people.]

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Canto 13.

1. [This canto describes in detail the demeanors, thoughts, temperaments, and the way of life that is expected from a self-realised, wise and enlightened man.]

To remain in a perpetual child-like state of innocence resulting in having child-like behaviours and temperaments, to remain without any worldly attachments and infatuations, to be free from all forms of corruptions and their attendant influences, to remain silent, to endeavour genuinely towards acquiring truthful

knowledge, and to remain mentally and emotionally above the bondages created by time and circumstances, i.e. to remain calm, steady and unruffled even under adverse conditions, or feel elated in favourable ones—this state of existence has been described as the last state of exalted existence of the consciousness. It is called the ‘Kaivalya’ state¹.

Prajapati had said that once a man realises what is the best stature for him, what is the highest stature of existence that he should aim for (though it may not have the glitter and charm of this colourful world magically created by delusions), he should stay alone under a tree, wear worn out rag-like clothes, not seek help from anyone, and always remain submerged and engrossed in a state of Samadhi wherein a man remains in a perpetual trance-like state of quietness and oblivious of his surroundings, and when he is perpetually contemplative and meditative. This state helps a man to strive to realise the pure ‘self’ which is the consciousness in the form of the eternal Atma. Such a man is self contented, is without any desires, aspirations, yearnings, hopes and expectations. All his desires and volitions have been trounced and vanquished. He has no wish even to live, or to protect himself, and harm others who he thinks are harming his own interests.

This inculcates such fearlessness in him that he is no more afraid of such cruel creatures as an intoxicated elephant, a wild lion, a poisonous scorpion, the mosquito which causes such dangerous and fatal diseases as malaria or dengue, the mongoose, a snake, a demon, a Gandharva (representing an illusive spirit) etc. He treats them as death personified, and having realised that ‘death’ is the last frontier to be crossed or hurdle to be overcome before one’s Atma can be liberated from the bondage of the gross body and merge with the eternal and imperishable Brahm, he rather welcomes death with open arms.

He sincerely endeavours to remain steady and unwavering, unemotional and unaffected like the tree. He strives to become magnanimous, gracious, kind, merciful and forgiving like the tree². If anyone cuts him down in all possible ways (i.e. harms or ruins or hurts him with his deeds or actions or words in every manner imaginable)—e.g. usurps his property, insults him, sends him to exile, kills his family, makes him suffer horribly, he still remains unruffled and unwavering in his vows of treating all alike and remaining equitable, calm, poised and peaceful in the face of the gravest of adversities and provocations. He never pours scorn upon his tormentors; he does not curse them; he does not harbour any ill-will against them; he does not seek retribution or revenge; he does not feel grief, anguished, sorrowful, tormented, humiliated or harmed in any way like the tree of this example. He never gets angry, annoyed, vehement and vengeful against his tormentors. He wishes to remain unattached with and disassociated from all these things and emotions that infringe upon his tranquility and perpetual meditative state. He wishes to remain untainted and uncorrupted like the lotus flower that remains firmly established in its purity and beauty inspite of being surrounded by the dirty water of the pond so much so that the water does not manage to even stick to its petals.

Even if he is pierced and impaled by a pointed weapon like a spear or crucified with nails (like Jesus Christ was done), he never gets angry and lose his cool. He wishes to remain steady and uniform and uncorrupted like the sky³. A wise, enlightened and truly realised man is he who inculcates these noble and great virtues in him—the grand virtues of the tree as well as of the sky. He remains steady and unwavering in his path and conviction. He never loses his cool, poise and composure. He never becomes angry, wrathful, vehement and vindictive. He remains firmly rooted in what is the ‘ultimate Truth’. This state is the truthful aspect of the Atma’s

existence. In this state, the Atma has realised its true nature as being pure consciousness free from all forms of taints and corruptions vis-à-vis the artificial and deluding world. True realisation is the awareness of the falsehood of the external world which looks so deceptively enticing and attractive, and appears to be eternally real. A truly wise man would not find any pith and substance in this world which has the uncanny magical lure to attract even the wisest and hasten their downfall (1).

[Note—¹The word *Kaivalya* means the ‘only one’ or the non-dual state. It is a state of existence which is similar to the state of Samadhi in which the man goes about his daily life doing his chores in a routine way without getting emotionally involved in them and even remaining totally oblivious of what he is doing. He remains totally submerged in his inner self and thoughts. He appears in a virtual trance-like state of existence usually observed in realised ascetics and great philosophers. People regard such men as absent minded, but they are so much absorbed in themselves that they are not concerned with others think of them. For them, the external world ceases to exist though they physically live in it and interact with it. This Kaivalya form of existence is tantamount to having emancipation while a man still has a body, because in this state he is free from all sufferings, worries and sorrows as well as all forms of attachments, entanglements and involvements with the artificial and deluding world that are the usual features of a worldly man submerged in world’s entrapping charm. This state is comparable to liberation of the soul upon death when it is physically liberated from the bondages of the limitations imposed by the gross body; the only difference being that in the former case the man is alive and enjoys the body, while in the latter case he sheds the burden of the body. The Kaivalya state is considered superior because such a man lives a life of happiness and contentedness; he never suffers from any worldly miseries and worries, he treats the world around him as of no consequence, and remains indifferent to its deluding effects and their entanglements. On the other hand, the ordinary man might find emancipation upon death, but his life is a burden while he is still alive in it. Such a man has not truly understood the teachings of the scriptures; he has not understood the spirit of spiritualism, for their main aim is to give peace and tranquility to the tormented soul and help in its liberation from the deluding effects of the body and the world. This concept has been elaborately described in Muktiko-panishad which is chapter no.19 of this volume.

According to Yoga Upanishads, Kaivalya Mukti is achieved even when the creature is alive because it primarily involves total realisation and disassociation from the body and the world with which it has to interact. When the seeker dies, he simply abandons his mortal coil, the gross body consisting of the different sense organs, and merges his Pran or the Atma with the macrocosm outside. Since the word ‘Kaivalya’ means ‘the only’, this form of Mukti refers to the realisation of the one and the only spiritual Truth which is the absolute and irrefutable Reality in creation.

Since the Advaitya school believes in only one end of the soul— its merger with the parent Soul— they emphasis ‘Kaivalya Mukti’ as the only form of salvation and emancipation. The word Kaivalya itself means ‘only’, thereby implying that there is no other forms of Mukti except the one when the Atma abandons the gross body which is like a shackle for it, and then inseparably and indistinguishably merging with the supreme transcendental Soul of the cosmos. This is the eclectic and holistic form of Mukti extolled by the Upanishads. This Mukti means the dissolution or merger of the individual soul with the parent supreme Soul. The realisation that the soul of the individual creature is the same as the cosmic Soul residing in all the creatures of this world, to see the supreme Brahm as a resident of the inner-self of the individual creature as its

Atma, and identifying oneself with that Atma which is synonymous with that supreme Brahm, which in turn leads to the recognition of non-dual nature of the soul of the creature and the supreme Soul of the cosmos, realising therefore that there is no notion as ‘duality’ when dealing with divinity and the supreme transcendental being called ‘Brahm’ vis-à-vis the creature, and other such basic tenets of Vedanta are the foundation upon which Kaivalya Mukti rests.

²The *tree* never moves. It gives shelter and shade to everyone notwithstanding their intention to harm it by cutting it down. It is so generous and impartial that it shelters a lion, an elephant, a serpent, a mongoose et al equally without any distinction. Selfish people cut it down, but instead of cursing them it sprouts new shoot and leaves to grow once again and resume its service of providing shade and fruits and even the firewood to the same cruel men who had cut it down earlier. The fruit of the tree nourishes all without any differentiation. Therefore, a truly wise and enlightened man is compared to a tree for his magnanimity and generosity.

³The *sky* is pregnant with a wide variety of impurities. It is full of celestial bodies besides cosmic debris. It has the burning furnace of the sun as well as the cool pitcher of nectar symbolised by the moon. The black clouds of a storm with its stabs of ferocious lightening coexist with white fluffy clouds floating lazily across the calm sky. There are birds of prey and there are harmless kites flying in it. There is the polluted haze of the city as is the pristine clear atmosphere of a village and the mountain. There is the brightness of the day and the foreboding darkness of the night. But the wonder is that none of these really affect the sky at all—it remains clear and untainted in its basic nature and form. All these things cited here are extraneous to the fundamental nature and characteristic of the sky. The sky treats all of them with the same magnanimity and kindness. Similarly, a wise man treats all the creatures with whom he has to interact in this world with the same equanimity and fortitude as the sky.]

2. The ‘earth’ is at the heart or core of all types of ‘smells’ (because smell originate from things having their birth on earth and it stays close to the earth; if there was no earth, there would be no such perception as ‘smell’; see also canto 9, verse no.3, and canto 5, verse no.3 in this context).

The ‘water’ is at the heart or core of all types of ‘tastes’ (because taste can be felt only when the food dissolves in the saliva in the mouth, and saliva is a fluid based on water; besides this, all the chemicals present in food that renders it its characteristic taste and flavour become active only when they are dissolved in water and reacted upon by the various enzymes of the body which create the necessary impulses that are interpreted by the brain as ‘taste or flavour’; these chemicals and enzymes need water to become active and activate the taste buds; see also canto 9, verse no. 4, and canto 5, verse no. 4 in this context).

The ‘light’ present in the eyes is at the heart or core of all forms of shapes, sizes and colours that are ‘seen’ or are ‘visible’ in this world (because it is the light that lightens up the things and makes them visible to the eye, and it is the consciousness present as the ‘light’ of the eye that enables that organ to see anything; this is evident when one is unable to see anything in the dark; see also canto 9, verse no.1, and canto 5, verse no.1 in this context).

The ‘wind or air’ element is at the heart or core of all perceptions of ‘touch’ (because the subtlest feeling of the wind or a soft breeze ‘touching’ the skin establishes that the surface of the body represented by the skin—to the exclusion of all other organs—is responsible for the feeling the sense of touch; the wind’s touch is

very soft and subtle, softer and subtler than the touch of even the feather; see also canto 9, verse no. 5, and canto 5, verse no.5 in this context).

The 'sky or space' element is at the heart of all kinds of the 'spoken word' (because the spoken word, which is a form of sound, needs the space of the sky to travel and make itself heard, as sound travels in waves in the open space of the sky, and any solid lying between the source of sound and the person who hears it creates an obstacle that impedes its transmission; see also canto 9, verse no. 6, and canto 5, verse no. 2 in this context).

The secret and inherent temperaments, habits and inclinations of an individual, which form his character and decide his general outlooks, are called his 'Abyakta Prakriti'. This Prakriti or innate nature of his is at the heart or core of all his behaviours, his actions and deeds, his traditions and customs, his beliefs and faiths, his character traits, habits, manners and behavioural patterns, his course of life and his fate, etc. [That is, the fundamental nature of a man decides what he is and what he makes of his life. These special characters are specific for a man and they are hidden inside his bosom but reveal themselves in the form of his behaviours, thinking, habits and nature, and such other traits that he depicts in his day to day life. The predominance of a particular quality out of the three basic qualities of Sat, Raj and Tam that are integral part of all living beings decide his personal unique behaviour and the type of man he is; what would be his thinking and how he would interpret knowledge. See also canto 9, verse no.7—14, and canto 5, verse no.6—9, 11—12 in this context.]

'Death' is the ultimate and irrefutable 'truth' for all the creatures (because all those who are born must die; this is an incontrovertible and unquestioned fact of life and creation; see also canto 1, verse no. 4 in this context). The death is a metaphor for 'end' and the 'final frontier from where there is no return'. This death takes the creature to its final destination which is Brahm. It is synonymous with final emancipation and salvation; it is liberation from the bondages of the body and the soul's deliverance from this entrapping deluding world. It is the situation when the individual's Atma or soul becomes one with the supreme Atma or soul of the cosmos; it is the merger of the former with the latter. With this merger, nothing of the former is left; i.e. the individual Atma of the creature becomes one and the same with the cosmic Atma called the attributeless and formless and nameless entity known as Brahm. Beyond that, there is no concept of 'true or false', nor is there anything as the 'ultimate truth', because what the Atma has managed to achieve by its merger with Brahm is in itself the ultimate truth; it is the final frontier. [Refer Canto 11 of this Upanishad in this context.]

This is the preaching of the Vedas; this is their tenet, their axiom and maxim; this is the essence of their canons. This wisdom is the path of emancipation and salvation (2).

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Canto 14.

1. [In this canto, one entity is shown as the 'food or fodder' of another entity. That is, the second one devours or brings about the end of the first one. This progression starts from earth which is the habitat of all living creatures who are mortal, and which is the grossest element in creation. The progression culminates in Brahm in which 'death' itself vanishes. This canto essentially says 'all that which has come into existence

would certainly come to an end one day or the other'. It elaborates upon Canto 2, verse no.4, Canto 9, and Canto 11, verse no.1.]

If the earth is 'Anna' or food, then the water is that which devours it. [That is, if we symbolically treat earth as something that can be eaten or devoured, then it is the water that would gulp it down or devour it. This is true because earth consists of three fourths of water—not only on its surface but even in its bosom because the upper crusts of earth literally float on the underground ocean of water which forms a distinct strata or ring around the core of the earth. At the time of doomsday, the surging waters of the ocean would submerge the entire surface of earth in the great deluge. Over centuries, many islands have vanished under water of the ocean, and in our recent history there are umpteen examples where large tracts of land mass have become submerged in rising waters of the sea or the ocean, or even by storms and cyclones.]

Next, if water is treated as the symbolic Anna (food or fodder), then it is devoured by 'Jyoti' (literally meaning light, but here representing the 'fire' because the fire has light as its main visible feature, besides heat and energy which are invisible.) As water cannot survive heat, it is symbolically devoured by that entity which has light, i.e. the fire element. [We all know that heat is the greatest enemy of water; the latter simply cannot withstand the onslaught of fire. The water evaporates by the heat generated by light also, as is evident from the fact that water evaporates quickly during hot summer days under the scorching sunlight though there is no direct fire involved. The light energy has heat energy inherent in it, and the former virtually eats up or devours the water. The Upanishadic sage was very deft in use of words as he has used the word Jyoti, meaning light, instead of fire so as to widen the scope of that entity which acts as the devourer of water.]

In this chain, if the fire be likened to the Anna (food or fodder), then it is devoured or eaten by the wind element. [No matter how strong the fire is raging, it is no match for the strength of the fierce wind because a gale strong wind can put out any fire just by its blow. The wind can literally devour or eat or extinguish the existence of the fire if it so wants.]

If the wind becomes the symbolic Anna (food or fodder), then it is devoured or eaten by the Akash or the sky element. [No matter how fierce the storm is, it cannot cover the entire length and breadth of the sky which is fathomless and measureless. It is practically observed that there might be a strong wind blowing at one place on earth, like a severe dust storm in a desert or a hurricane along the coast, while there is absolutely no movement of air at other places and the atmosphere there is very still and suffocative. Further, no matter how strong the wind blows, after some time and distances its energy begins to get dissipated and the wind begins to get calmed down. Since the wind blows in the sky, it dissipates and vanishes in the deep bowls of the sky which virtually devours it. This is why huge devastating storms that seem to cover all the directions of the earth from the ground are only specks of whirling wind, or at the most a wide circular dark patch when seen from the upper reaches of the sky and photographed by weather satellites.]

If the Akash or sky is regarded as the symbolic Anna (food or fodder), then it is devoured or eaten by the various sense organs of the creature. [The sense organs of the creature make up its body, and the body encloses the sky element within its outer shell of the skin which acts as the trap for the sky or space element which is basically endless and fathomless, and is otherwise un-trappable and cannot be hemmed in an enclosure. This situation is the symbolic devouring of the sky element by the sense organs of the creature. Another connotation is this—all the sense organs of

perception, such as the eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue, have their targets or objects which they perceive located in the space outside the body. For example, the eye sees things that are located in the outside world and present in the open space so that the eye can see them without any hindrance or obstacle coming in its way. The eye would not be able to see anything that is not in the open, and is hidden in some place. Therefore, this sense organ called the eye virtually devours or crosses and overcomes the hurdle of the sky in order to reach its target, which is the object that is seen by it. Had it not been able to devour or overcome the hurdle of the sky or space lying between itself and the object viewed, it would not have been able to see it. Similarly, the ear hears sounds from far and wide after having overcoming the hurdle of the space located between itself and the sound that is heard; the nose smells anything after overcoming the intervening space between itself and the objects smelled, and so on and so forth. A modern man is said to have 'conquered space' with his space flights and rockets and space stations.]

If the various organs of the body, called the 'Indris', are to be treated as the symbolic Anna (food or fodder), then they are devoured or eaten by the Mana. [The mind is able to subjugate and control the various sense organs of the body if it so wills. It is the mind that decides what the eye would like to see, and what scene seen by the eye is worth remembering and storing in its data bank and what is to be deleted. Similarly, the mind determines which smell is pleasant and acceptable and which is not, and so on and so forth. That is why, by controlling the mind the rest of the sense organs are easily controlled, because they are all under the mind's subjection. In other words, the mind has virtually devoured or decimated or usurped or eliminated the independent existence of the various sense organs. This is tantamount to the mind gobbling up the sense organs because it robs them of their independence.]

If the Mana (mind) is to be treated as the symbolic Anna (food or fodder), then it is devoured or eaten by the Buddhi or intellect. [The mind is under the control and subjection of the intellect. The mind does routine things, but the intellect takes charge when deep thinking, research and analysis are needed for any decision making process be activated. All people have a mind as part of the body, but they do not have the same degree of intellect. It is the intellect only that has a sway over the mind, and no other part of the creature's body. Therefore, the Buddhi is superior to the Mana and rules the roost; it is the intelligent man that is highly honoured and sought after as compared to an ordinary man. In the hierarchy of things, the mind is much junior to the intellect. The intellect can overrule the mind. In short, the independence and the very existence of the mind depend upon the intellect, and therefore the latter is able to crush and annihilate the mind. The intellect always supersedes the mind, and therefore literally devours it or eliminates its independent existence.]

If the Buddhi or intellect is likened to Anna (food or fodder), then it is gobbled up or devoured by Prakriti (i.e. the natural habits, temperaments, inclinations and tendencies of a man which form an integral part of his character, identity and personality). [It is observed that more often than not a man is driven by his habits and natural temperaments as compared by the advice given to him by his discriminating intellect which warns him that what he is about to do is detrimental for him and his well being. But his inborn nature and inherent tendency compels him to override the sane advice and warnings given by the intellect and he indulges in things against its wishes, though he regrets later on. Such a man becomes impulsive and reckless in his behaviour and deeds, and is driven by his compulsive emotions and sentiments, by his characteristic innate nature, old habits, traditions, customs etc. instead of being

rational, prudent, wise, calculating, thoughtful and contemporary in his approach. The easiest example is smoking—a man knows that it is harmful for him, but he is so much under the influence of his habits that he just cannot free himself from its clutches and quit it. Similarly, a man is so bound by traditions that he may do certain things that are most irrational and out of tune with times, but he would not pay any heed to the suggestion given to him by the intellect or Buddhi.]

In the same vein, if the Buddhi is to be treated as Anna (food or fodder), then it is devoured by the 'Akshar', or literally the letter which is eternal and imperishable. [The letter forms words and they in turn form the body of knowledge enshrined in the scriptures and other books of knowledge. The intellect or Buddhi acquires its power of judgment and decision making when faced with an option or dilemma relying on what it has been taught and what it has learnt by reading, hearing and clarifying of doubts. All these are based on knowledge that needs words to be expressed and explained and encoded in the ancient scriptural texts, or explained by way of commentaries. In other words, the Akshar or letter is superior to Buddhi; the wrong information delivered by the letter forming the word may undo the good efforts of the Buddhi, and hence it is tantamount to the former eclipsing the very existence of the latter. When a wise man known for his intelligence reads or hears something, or gets new information by the medium of the word composed of letters that may influence his thoughts and decisions and change his earlier ones, then obviously the Buddhi has become subservient to the letter; the letter dominates the intellect; the letter/Akshar virtually devours or eclipses the original format of the intellect/Buddhi. We often hear people saying 'this argument defies all earlier knowledge and notion of this subject'.]

As we progress further in this progression, we observe that if we treat Akshar as Anna (food or fodder), then it is devoured or gobbled up by Mritu or 'personified death' representing the end of everything. [The Akshar or letter has any relevance only as long as the man is alive. After his death, nothing matters, not the letter or anything else. So symbolically, the imperishable and eternal letter is subjected to the superiority of death. In other words, even the seemingly endless body of knowledge encrypted in letters would come to an end one day or the other when its relevance and importance is lost. This might happen when, for example, the information loses its contemporary nature and becomes outdated, or when the civilization which uses the letter to disseminate information and spread learning becomes extinguished or dead. History bears testimony that great civilizations and great philosophers have perished and their words have been forgotten and relegated to the bowls of history books which few bother to read nowadays. All of them became fodder of death! Thus, Mritu or death can eat up or devour the Akshar of letter.]

In metaphysical perspective, the 'Mritu' (death; the end; the conclusion) element of creation is synonymous with one losing one's independent identity and getting rid of the gross body, because the real 'self' is the eternal Atma which never dies. With loss of grossness and with it the necessity of remaining involved with the mundane affairs of the deluding and artificial world of delusions and entrapments, the Atma or soul finds liberation and deliverance which in turn is equivalent to emancipation and salvation. The latter is again synonymous with being one the supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm.

Therefore, everything goes to that point from where it came; everything which has a beginning must necessarily come to an end. But this end is not the actual end as the word 'end' is usually taken to mean, for this 'end' means the entity's merger with the eternal and imperishable source from where it had emerged at the beginning. Thus we see that what is called 'the end' is actually a misnomer, and it only signifies the

reversal to one's origin, one's going back to one's original form which is eternal and imperishable like the Brahm! The word 'end' alludes to the end of all delusions, to the end of all dependence, to the end of all ties that bind the creature's Atma to the body as well as the world, to the end of all negativity and inauspiciousness etc.

Beyond this point, there is nothing left to be discussed and debated. There is no such concept as Truth or non-Truth. Verily, this is the teaching of the Vedas; this is their tenet; this is the maxim and axiom they emphasis upon in their canons; this is the universal principle they proclaim (2).

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Canto 15.

[This Canto narrates the path taken by the Atma to achieve Nirvana, or the final emancipation and salvation from where there is no return. To explain how the Atma leaves the body and rises up to reach the supreme Brahm, we would take the example of the launch of a rocket that lifts a space ship to come to grasp and visualise what is being said in this Canto. Refer also to Canto 11.]

1. Resuming his enquiry, sage Raikwa asked the great sage Ghorangiras—'Oh Lord! When this Atma, which is an embodiment, fount and treasury of 'Vigyan' (i.e. which has the characteristics of an entity that possesses empirical knowledge, has rational thinking, a high level of skill and expertise, is wise, erudite, sagacious, scholarly and enlightened), leaves this body and moves out of it, say which place does it 'burn', and what means does it employ to do so?' [The word 'burn' stands for conquering any entity, crushing its superiority and subjugating it; it means literally reducing it to ashes, and making it defunct and useless. Only a superior power can bring this about and burn the assets of a junior power as is evident in history when an invading imperial army would burn the entire city to establish its supremacy over it. Obviously, the need for burning a defeated city is a pervert action for it has already surrendered after all and there is no point in burning buildings and physical assets which could have been put to better use by the invader. 'Burning' also means to inflict pain and cause torments. Both these connotations are applicable here.]

Ghorangiras replied, 'When the Atma which has been 'ignited and empowered' with the truthful knowledge preached by the scriptures and hence become possessed of Vigyan, leaves the body and makes its exit, then it 'burns' everything around in the searing heat that is produced at the time of its launch from the body. [As any space-bound rocket consumes a lot of fuel and emits a lot of hot gases--] This Atma, which has embarked on its journey bound for Brahm, consumes and burns the vital winds present inside the body and uses their energy for its 'lift off' from the body. So it progressively burns the vital winds called Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaana, Samaana, Vairambha, Mukhya, Antaryama, Prabhanjana, Kumar, Shyen, Shwet, Krishna and Naaga respectively in this order. [See also canto 4, verse no.2, and canto 9, verse no. 1—15 in this context. In other words, all these winds collect themselves from the various parts of the body; they withdraw themselves and merge into one unit called simply as Pran. Their combined energy and force would be needed by the Atma/soul to exit from the body. In modern parlance, this is the first 'strap-on rocket that is burnt' during the lift-off of the Atma which is like the space ship going towards its destination in the far away cosmos to land upon Brahm! In the present case, the analogy of the rocket is cited to explain what happens at the time of the departure of

the Atma from the body which is like the launch pad.] This is the *first phase* of the launch of the Atma on its journey towards Brahm.

Once the initial ‘fuel’ in the shape of the vital winds ignites the engine that now launches the subtle entity called the Atma, the latter shoots off with a ‘roar’ and ‘punctures through’ the successive layers of resistance that it encounters on its onward journey to Brahm. These barriers that it has to overcome successively are represented by the earth element, the water element, the Tej (energy and vitality by which the Atma is pulled down as the last ditch attempt by the body and its organs before it finally frees itself from its clutches), the wind element, and the finally sky element known as Akash respectively in that order. [See also canto 11, verse no.1 in this context.] This is the *second phase* of the launch of the Atma on its journey towards Brahm.

The next phase to be burnt is the various states of existence of the consciousness—viz. the waking state, the dreaming state, the deep sleep state, and the Turiya state. This is followed by the burning of (i.e. conquering and overcoming the resistance offered by) the various Lokas which symbolised the areas of the sky above the earth’s atmosphere and called the Maha Loka (meaning the great world beyond the earth even as we have a city and the suburbs called the greater city area) and the Parloka (the world beyond this mortal world where the Atma had been residing till now). [See also canto 4, verse no. 2—4, and canto 10, verse no.1 in this context.] This is the *third phase* of the launch of the Atma on its journey towards Brahm.

If we take the example of the rocket and the space ship that is being launched, we will observe that with each phase of burning, the space ship has become so much the lighter because the so-called ‘strap-on rockets’ that had aided in its launch get burnt out and fall away from the main space craft. The Atma has progressively got rid off its encumbrances in the form of various hindrances that it encounters in its spiritual journey of discovery of its true self and attain self-realisation. First it has to control the winds by various means such as doing Yoga or meditation and Pranayam or breath-control exercises. This would help it to harness their stupendous energy and vitality, and at the same time prevent the winds from causing the Atma unnecessary disturbances by making the body restless. It also subtly implies the harnessing of the energy trapped in the Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine) and other Naadis (the ducts that channelise the vital energies of the body and the vitality that literally flows Naadis). The burning of the various Lokas as mentioned above is a symbolic way of saying that the Atma is able to completely detach itself from the attractions that generally tie the creature to this enticing and colourful world of sensual enjoyments and comforts. Using the analogy of the rocket once again, all these encumbrances burn and fall off from the spacecraft-like Atma, thereby making it lighter of its worldly baggage of attachments and their attendant miseries and torments.

The Atma burns or conquers the visible world called the Loka as well as the invisible world called the Aloka. [The word ‘Loka’ literally means something that is visible and clearly seen, while the word ‘Aloka’ means something that is invisible, hidden from sight and not clearly seen. Here it implies that the Atma first disassociates itself from the attractions, enjoyments and comforts proffered by the visible materialistic world in which it lives, and then in the next step it even stops thinking and imagining about things that it does not directly see or enjoy or possess but aspires to see, enjoy or acquire. In the first phase the renunciation is towards the visual world of sensual gratification, and then this renunciation is made to progress to total annihilation of the mind and train it not to even imagine things unnecessary, and

instead of keeping itself busy in futile imaginations, it should rather concentrate its attention on spiritual matters and truth about its real identity and self consciousness. It should not bother about the myriad unfulfilled desires and hopes that continuously torment a creature, but try to realise that this world is never complete and pursuing it in order to obtain fulfillment is like pursuing a mirage for water in a desert.

In short, the Atma, which is aiming for the ultimate goal from where there is no return and which would give it eternal peace and rest, should burn everything behind so there is no remnants of attractions left that could act as impediments in its spiritual progress later on. It is like an army burning everything which it encounters on its forward march in order to prevent the enemy to re-group and attack from behind the lines. The Atma likewise burns all and every attachments during its spiritual journey to ensure that there is nothing behind its back that could ever pull it down into the vortex of attractions and charming memory of the things left behind in this mortal world that could be the cause of hindrance in its progress towards self-realisation and the ultimate liberation and deliverance. This would pre-empt any chance of the Atma ever coming back on one pretext or the other. Again, this would imply that the Atma burns or annihilates all concepts of deeds and their results, for if it does not do so, it would be entangled in those deeds and their good or bad effects.] This is the *fourth phase* of the launch of the Atma on its journey towards Brahm.

The Atma has now crossed the solar system as it were, and therefore for it there is no 'sun' or any of the laws of Nature that applies to those entities that are in the vicinity of the mortal world represented by this earth. [Taking the example of the space ship that has sailed past the solar system, the laws of gravity and other physical forces that had exerted themselves on it while it was still inside the periphery of the solar system belonging to our sun cease to have any relevance for it once it goes beyond its boundary. There, new forces of the cosmos come into play and begin to have their influence upon it. Likewise, the Atma has now entered the environ of the supreme transcendental Brahm, and as a consequence it is subjected to new set of forces that are different from what it had experienced while on earth. In other words, once the Atma breaks free from the clutches of this entrapping deluding world and renounces its attachments with it for good, it experiences something quite unique and to which it was not accustomed. This unique experience is that of Brahm, its new habitat and environ.] The Atma has entered the new environ of its destination Brahm, and this environ is different from what it had know till now. As it begins preparation for merger with Brahm (or landing upon the surface of the cosmic entity for which it had started on its journey), it has to overcome or burn 'Mahattatwa', 'Prakriti' and 'Akshar' successively. [In other words, the Atma has to overcome such subtle hurdles as having a sense of greatness and majesty, and instead develop humility and simplicity. Next, it has to overcome its natural habits and temperaments that act like impediments in its spiritual progress. Finally, it has to even forgo what the 'letters', the Akshar, of the scriptures read, for the Atma has now reached the stage when it no longer needs any scriptural guidance. See canto 11, verse no.1 for details.] This is the *fifth phase* for the Atma before its merger with the supreme transcendental Brahm.

Finally, when the Atma has reached Brahm, it finds 'death' or Mritu. [This is a metaphoric way of saying that the spacecraft bearing the Atma has finally landed on the surface of its destination which is Brahm.] The Atma then plunges headlong into the fathomless Brahm from where it never emerges again. That is why it has found 'death', which means it has met an end; it has come to the final frontier from where there is no return. [The word 'death' refers to something that will not be revived

again, or that which has been concluded.] In this state, the Atma has become one with Brahm. This is the *sixth and the final phase* of its search for Brahm.

After that, there is no such concept as an apparent truth, real truth, absolute truth, universal truth etc., and there is neither any kind of falsehood. There is no need for such debates or discrimination because the Atma's independent existence and identity has been lost for ever after its merger with the supreme Brahm. It is like the drop of water falling into the ocean and then how is it possible to ascribe any separate identity to that drop? Whether the ocean is sour or salty, whether it is calm or heaving, whether it is defined as the 'red sea' or the 'dead sea', or the Indian Ocean or the Atlantic Ocean, say how it matters to that drop of water!

Indeed, this is the real definition of 'Nirvan' (ultimate emancipation and salvation for the soul of the creature). This is the teaching of the Vedas; this is their tenet; this is the axiom and maxim enshrined in their canons (1).

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Canto 16.

1. Sage Saubal (or Subal) has expounded the fundamental principles pertaining to Brahm in a brief and succinct manner. This Upanishad is like a 'seed' for the huge knowledge-tree of Brahm. It is so mystical, esoteric and enigmatic that it is difficult to understand, and at the same time therefore it should not be given or taught or preached or divulged to incompetent and unworthy people.

[Now, what are the characteristic qualities of such ineligible or incompetent people? The answer is as follows--] It should not be taught or preached to someone who is not very peaceful and calm in his mind and demeanors. It should not be taught or preached to a person who is not one's son or a disciple, and who has not stayed with the teacher or preacher for at least one year. [This time limit is set to help the teacher to ascertain the eligibility, sincerity, aptitude, integrity and competence of the person and decide whether to teach him the profound tenets of this Upanishad or not. This one year period is a sort of preparatory period which helps the aspiring student (disciple) tune his mind and inculcate strict disciplines that are needed for the study of the profound teachings of the scriptures, for fickle minded restless people are not suited to pursue this great knowledge. That is why we have screening entrance exam for technical and professional courses in even modern times.] Hence, with this criterion in view, it should not be taught to a stranger though he might be of a noble birth.

Only those who have the greatest of faith in, the greatest of reverence and devotion for their teacher, and who consider that he is more honourable and worthy of praise than even Brahm, should be taught this Upanishad. [This is because it is the teacher who highlights and uncovers the profound secrets of Brahm, which otherwise would have remained hidden from and unknown to the spiritual seeker. These secrets of Brahm would have remained sheathed in a veil of ignorance, and the glories of Brahm would have been kept under wraps and not made available for the spiritual elevation of the seeker had it not been for the wisdom and teaching of the wise teacher. So, if the student or disciple has doubts about the teacher's integrity and depth of knowledge at the very outset, then he would be constantly skeptical and doubtful. This will affect his concentration in studies. The one year period mentioned in this verse also helps the student to judge the teacher.]

This knowledge throws light on the exalted Atma which is self-illuminated and its glow shows light to others just like that wise and enlightened teacher who has removed the darkness of ignorance for the disciple.

This is essentially the path to obtain liberation and deliverance, to emancipation and salvation. This is the path to illuminate the reality of the ultimate Truth (known as Brahm). This is what the Vedas teach and preach. This is the maxim and axiom of their canons. This is the principal tenet proclaimed by them. This is the principal principle propounded and proclaimed by them! This is their solemn declaration and edict! Amen! (1).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—7

MANTRIKA UPANISHAD

Belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, this Upanishad eulogizes the supremacy of Brahm and says that it's a paradox that inspite of the fact that the Atma is an image of Brahm, and the fact is well established and known, the latter is not visible or perceivable by the former under ordinary circumstances when it assumes the form of a living creature. It is only possible when the darkness of ignorance which engulfs the creature from all sides like a shroud encasing a body is removed or dispelled by the enlightening light of knowledge and wisdom. Ordinary people have different perspectives and views of the world and the supreme transcendental Brahm, but they fail to understand the underlying universal Truth about the non-dual reality and the irrefutable supremacy of Brahm. Brahm is the ultimate target of all Mantras (which are divine letters or words used in all spiritual practices to invoke the cosmic power and energy for the betterment of the creature). Brahm is steady and sturdy like the pillar. He is manifested as the myriad form that this cosmos has taken. He is the one who drives and controls the functioning of everything that constitutes this vast creation that is likened to a huge Pipal (Fig) tree. Brahm is the one who is worshipped, adored, revered and extolled by means of hymns sung in his honour by the various Vedas. Brahm is the cause, destination and support of the entire cosmos consisting of the animate as well as the inanimate world. Those wise people who recognise his supremacy and transcendental nature as well as his eternal and truthful existence are indeed enlightened, erudite and wise. They see nothing else except Brahm everywhere. They are said to be Brahm-realised.

-----Shanti Paath-----

1. OM salutations! The supreme, transcendental entity represented by the ethereal word OM has eight legs representing eight noble qualities or virtues which act as pedestal that supports the creation¹. This entity is an embodiment of purity, holiness and divinity. It is like a divine Swan² (which is symbolic of erudition and wisdom as well as purity and cleanliness) and represents the Trisutra³ (the three threads that are intertwined to make the sacred thread worn by Hindus). It represents both the individual creature symbolised by the word 'Vyashti' (i.e. an individual, anything in

isolation) as well as the entire cosmos in its composite form represented by the word 'Samashti' (i.e. consolidated form, a combined form, all inclusive and en-masse)⁴. It is miniscule, microcosmic and atomic in its fundamental form. It is imperishable, infinite, eternal, unspent and non-decaying in nature. It is glorious, radiant, illuminated and splendidous. It is the supreme and pure conscious Atma personified. We experience and witness that Atma everywhere in all the three paths⁵ that we follow. But the irony is that we just cannot see it in physical terms as we see other gross and perishable things in this world to be convinced of its existence (1).

[Note—¹The eight legs or pedestals of Brahm--- The so-called *eight legs or pedestals of Brahm* are the various spiritual and mystical empowerments that Brahm needs and possesses that enable him to conceive, develop, sustain, support and finally conclude the vast creation. Broadly, they can be classified into six categories.

(i) First are the *eight Siddhis* or mystical and enigmatic powers that it possesses. These are the following--(i) 'Anima'—means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima'—is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima'—is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima'—is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti'—is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Prakramya'—is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa'—is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa'—is to be able to control and subdue others.

(ii) Second, there are the eight assets that are needed to help support and sustain the creatures in this world. These are called the *eight Vasus*, and they are the various patron Gods who preside over the essential assets that are necessary for sustenance of life. These Vasus are—Vishnu is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun),

(vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) the rays and radiance of the sun (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), and (viii) the holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation).

According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the *Vasus* are the following-. Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following-- Dhruv (ध्रुव), Dhar (धर), Som (सोम), Aap (आप), Anil (अनिल), Anal (अनल), Pratush (प्रत्यूष) and Prabhas (प्रभास).

(iii) The third set of mystical and spiritual powers that Brahm possesses are the *eight virtues* that have stupendous spiritual prowess, and they together empower Brahm to help the latter to support and sustain the entire creation. These powers are derived by severe Tapa (penances and austerities) and are part of Yoga (meditative techniques) prescribed for acquiring immense spiritual potentials. Briefly they are the following--(1) 'Yam' or self restraint; (2) 'Niyam' or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) 'Aasan' or postures for meditation; (4) 'Pranyam' or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) 'Pratyahar' or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) 'Dhaarna' or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) 'Dhyan' or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; and (8) 'Samadhi' or a state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation.

(iv) The *eight forms of Maya* are the delusion and ignorance creating powers of Brahm without which the creation would neither be conceived nor expanded, because if everyone becomes aware of the reality, if everyone realises that everything is perishable and immaterial, that whatever is seen and enjoyed are like a mirage seen in a desert, then all would renounce the world, there would be no marriages and procreation, there would be no creation of wealth and strife and tension to protect this wealth, there would be no desire to have dominance over others, for all are equal and one in the eyes of Brahm and they have the same Atma which prevails uniformly in the breadth and length of the creation. So Brahm uses Maya as a tool to maintain a veil of ignorance and delusions to carry forward his game plan, until the time he decides that he had had enough of it and then initiates the folding-up process of concluding this creation for good, or for at least that time when he decides to roll the carpet once again.

Now, these eight forms that Maya takes are the following—the five elements forming the basic building blocks of the gross creation (i.e. the elements of earth, water, fire, air and space which form the gross body of all the living creatures) + mind + intellect (together called the subtle body of the creature) + Ahankar (the ego, pride and arrogance that the creature possesses, leading to the notion of 'I', 'me', or 'mine' = eight entities.

(v) Now, once the creation has been brought into being, Brahm has to look after it. And to do it, he uses his maverick powers of care-taking and sustenance as revealed in the form of the *eight mothers* who look after the offspring-creation. These mothers are the following-- (a) one who gives birth, (b) one who takes care of or rears (e.g. a nanny), (c) a foster mother, (d) mother earth, (e) the holy cow, (f) goddess Laxmi who is the patron goddess of wealth and material well being, (g) Sheetla Mata who is the patron Goddess of infectious skin diseases, e.g. chickenpox, and (i) any elderly, respected woman.

(vi) Brahm then uses his *fatherly* virtues to take care and sustain his creation by manifesting himself as the eight Lokpals. They are the following-- (a) Indra (the king of Gods), (b) Agni (the Fire God), (c) Yam (the Death God), (d) Nirriti, (f) Varun (the Water God), (g) Vayu (the Wind God), (h) Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), and (i) Ish (Lord Shiva).

²A *Swan*--- This particular bird is used as a metaphor for someone who is deemed to be most wise, glorified, enlightened and knowledgeable in the essence of the fundamental teachings of the scriptures about spiritualism and metaphysics, and who picks the best amid the clutter of things available, even as a swan is reputed to partake pearls or milk and exclude water and other less valuable residual things. Swan is considered as the wisest amongst the birds.

³The *Trisutra* are the three threads used in making the sacred thread worn around the neck. These three threads stand for the three Gunas or qualities that Brahm possesses. These are the following-- 'Sata Guna or quality' is the noble, virtuous, auspicious and good qualities present in a creature. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. (b) 'Raja Guna or quality' covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being. (c) 'Tama Guna or quality' is the third quality; it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc.—i.e. in brief, immoral, denigrating and depraved behaviour marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of misdemeanours. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajasic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. Since the creation consists of all types of people, Brahm is deemed to possess all these qualities in him. The concept has also been described in detail in Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 4-11 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴The concept of *Vyashti* and *Samashti* has been explained in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 3, verse no. 2 which is Chapter no. 2 of this volume.

⁵The *three paths* that a spiritual seeker seeking to know Brahm follows are the following--(i) Karma Yoga, (ii) Gyan Yoga, and (iii) Bhakti Yoga.

(i) Karma Yoga expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get 'involved or attached' to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn't be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one's offering to the

God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person's subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

(ii) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be 'real' but is actually like a 'shadow of the truth'. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called 'seers' because they can 'see' beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

(iii) Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person's ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.]

2. Although that supreme, truthful and transcendental consciousness is without any attributes and forms, but it is visualised as being concealed in a cave or camouflaged by the veil of the different Gunas which are the inherent qualities¹ that are an integral part of all the visible forms that Brahm takes in the form of the myriad creatures of all denominations in this creation. That is, though Brahm is without any features or attributes or characteristics himself, but an ordinary person—in his ignorance which creates erroneous perceptions—imagines that that supreme, essentially truthful and conscious entity has such and such quality and attribute. This is because the ordinary person in this world is deluded under the spell of ignorance and is misled by enticements offered by the gross objects of this materialistic and deluding world. This throws a veil of darkness symbolising ignorance and delusions around him thereby preventing him from seeing and realising the actual 'truth'.

On the contrary, that person who is aware of the 'truth' and possesses noble qualities marked by judicious thinking, deep insight, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment is able to 'see' (i.e. realise, become aware of, witness and experience) that essential and absolute Reality and Truth known as Brahm and the pure conscious Atma in his heart (i.e. in his inner-self or his bosom) (2).

[Note—¹The *three qualities* that all creatures possess in lesser or greater degree and which decide its basic nature, character and temperaments are the following--

(a) 'Sata Guna or quality' is the noble, virtuous, auspicious and good qualities present in a creature. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. (b) 'Raja Guna or quality' covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities

are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds—both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being. (c) ‘Tama Guna or quality’ is the third quality; it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc.—i.e. in brief, immoral, denigrating and depraved behaviour marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of misdemeanors. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to a person’s downfall, ignominy and ruin.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body —e.g. two men —might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor —it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three ‘Gunas’ and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The Satwic quality or Guna is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

The Rajsic quality or Guna can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

The Tamsic quality or Guna covering the soul is like a fetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of ‘Satvic’ (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of ‘Rajsic’ or ‘Tamsic’ qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of ‘Satvic’ qualities in them; kings and householders who live a

noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.]

3. [The effects of Maya—i.e. delusions, ignorance, worldly misconceptions, etc.—are being briefly enunciated here.]

Even if the other methods are employed by ignorant creatures, who are under the influence of Maya¹ (delusions, ignorance and misconceptions) and are therefore oblivious about the actual reality, to concentrate upon and try to perceive (i.e. realise, witness and experience) that supreme, transcendental truthful consciousness called Brahm, they are unable to succeed in their endeavours. [That is, they are unable to experience and witness Brahm if they are under the influence of delusions, no matter how hard they try.] This is because the effect or influence of Maya is very overwhelming upon a creature, and this Maya is very sturdy and steady in its effect or influence. This Maya is the mother or progenitor of all faults, flaws and shortcomings that mire a creature's intellect, thought and wisdom; in fact Maya completely subdues the creature and makes it its serf.

This Maya has certain characteristics—such as it being a personification or a treasure house of 'Agyan' (ignorance or lack of wisdom and erudition; lack of truthful knowledge and enlightenment). Maya has eight forms or manifestations². It is without any birth or beginning. [That is, it predates the creation itself, because Maya is one of the qualities that the otherwise neutral Brahm had employed in order to initiate the process of this creation. It is one of those virtues that shape the nature, the habits, the temperaments, the behavioural patterns etc. of creation and its creatures. It is an integral part of Nature; it decides the basic nature and character of a creature.] The greater the influence of Maya upon a creature, the greater it is deluded and ignorant of the truth. There is no doubt about it (3).

[Note—¹It would be pertinent here to discuss the concept of *Maya*. Maya is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a 'mother or creator', while the other half refers to the notion of doubt, of either this or that. The word 'Ma' also means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of'. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It refers to the situation that is the 'mother of all confusions, doubts and perplexities'. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusory, deceptive, mirage like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define all these complex phenomenon. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance based, illusory, imposturing, deceitful, invisible and super-natural; all that which has no reality or substance; all that is hollow. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme

transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions

Maya has three basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called *Trigunmayi* (त्रिगुणमयि), i.e. one which has the three Gunas or qualities. These three Gunas or qualities are— Sata, Raj and Tam. ‘Sata’ is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvment leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. ‘Raja’ is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. ‘Tama’ is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used has a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, ‘Tama’ means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These three qualities together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of ‘Sata’ makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of ‘Tama’ which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

When a man understands any ‘Truth’ after rigorously examining the ‘truthfulness’ of that truth, when he has established the veracity of facts, he believes in it more firmly and more convincingly. No matter what other people tell him about the truth being not the correct or the whole truth, he would not listen to them, simply because he has verified the facts for himself, he has witnessed the truth himself, he has logically eliminated all falsehoods to deduce that what he knows is the ‘truthful Truth’. His Truth is based on rigid and solid foundation; he is unwavering and steady in it. If he is steadfast and convinced in his knowledge, no matter how much ignorance and delusions (Maya) try to push him away from the absolute ‘Truth’, he will remain steadfast and unwavering in it. There will be no doubts and confusions in his mind.

The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent sheet which covers the supreme ‘truth’ in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the truth that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. This is a simple way of understanding what is called ‘illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality’. Maya nevertheless hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the ‘Nirgun Brahm’ by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time assuming the glorious attributes of Brahm itself. So ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the ‘veiled truth’ as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual ‘truth’ is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lend it its own colour and hue to it . As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes ‘Sagun’, or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.

Maya has *three names*—viz. (a) Maha Maya—or the great powers exhibited by Brahm at the cosmic level. This Maya is the progenitor of all other types of Mayas which keep the individual creature trapped in

their net. The Maha Maya is the virtual mistress of all the delusions and misconceptions and their attendant ignorance that keep all the creatures of this creation enthralled by their deceptive charm. (b) Yog Maya—this is the stupendous magical powers created by the union of the supreme authority of creation known as Brahm, and the mystical and esoteric powers that delusions and hallucinations can create for the creature. (c) Maya Shakti—this is the ‘shakti’ or power and authority displayed by Maya in association with Brahm from whom it acquires its stupendous energy and powers.

‘Yog Maya’ can be further understood as follows-- The word ‘Yogmaya’ has two parts, viz.-Yog and Maya. Yoga means meditation and contemplation, while Maya refers to the cosmic energy and delusions created by the Lord at the time of creation. ‘Yog’ also means union or conjunction or fusion of two entities. Therefore, Yogmaya refers to the fusion of the cosmic energy with the delusion-creating powers of the supreme Brahm when he did decide to start the process of creation. The illusion created by him removed the distinction between the truth and falsehood so much so that both appeared the same and became interchangeable. That is why, what appears true on the surface is actually false, and vice versa. But to enable this to happen, Brahm had to meditate and focus his attention to ignite that inherent but latent energy that is an integral part of creation. In other words, he had to do Tapa, which is another form of Yoga. The resultant stupendous forces of Nature that were unleashed by Brahm’s meditation led to the chain of events that culminated in the revelation of the cosmos as it is known today. This magnificent event or the primary force that set this chain in motion has been conceptualized by the Purans as a deity known as ‘Yogmaya’; she has been depicted by them as the female counterpart of the maverick Lord of creation, who has been personified as the Viraat Purush. In the case of Lord Ram, who is that Viraat Purush also known as Vishnu, that Yogmaya is represented by Sita. The other connotation of ‘union’ implies that this Yogmaya establishes a link between the ignorant and deluded creature, and the unadulterated, supreme and ultimate Truth represented by the Lord. The word also refers to the magical and mystical powers displayed by mystics and ascetics, which they have acquired by the virtue of their meditation and contemplation.

We can understand this phenomenon of how the Maya of the Lord has created this vast canvas of creation with a simple example. A painter wishes to paint a landscape. He starts with a pure white canvas, and using his imagination and powers to visualise a magnificently beautiful scene, he starts painting with numerous primary colours and then goes on mixing these colours to produce umpteen numbers of colours of varying hues and shades. Besides the colour, he continuously adds a stroke here and a brush there as he tries to reveal on the lifeless canvas the conception of life as he visualises in his mind; he is never satisfied with his work and goes on and on endlessly adding colours and lines to the canvas. The result is most astounding and stupendous to behold. But still the painter is not satisfied; so the net result is that the canvas gets being redone over and over again, and layers after layers of lines that had been made and erased, of paints that had been painted over numerous times, of shapes and figures that had been visualised, rejected and reconceived and placed on the canvas only to make the painter uneasy about them. In short, the basic canvas that was pristine pure at the beginning has been reduced to scrap! The painter then keeps it aside or if totally disgusted with it, he may throw it in the garbage bin.

This all but sums up how the supreme Lord creates, develops and concludes the creation. The clean white canvas represents the Satwic qualities with which the Atma starts out. The painter is the supreme Lord or Brahm, the landscape he imagines is equivalent to Maya because it has no actual existence but is imagined by him, and he is so skilled a painter that once the painting is ready, the scene that is depicted on the canvas appears to be very real and live, creating an illusion of the grandeur of the actual thing; this is a deception because the painter has used his imagination as the subject of the painting, but an ignorant man who is not aware of this fact would believe that the painting has been inspired by some actual landscape that the painter must have seen somewhere. As a matter of fact, it might also happen that the scene does actually exist, but the painter has added touches of his own imagination to add vibrancy and colour to the scene about which the observer is unaware. The scene and the 3-dimensional landscape is equivalent to the creation and the colourful Nature. The paint and the primary colours used by the Lord during the process of creation to make it vibrant and lively are the different Gunas (virtues, qualities and characteristics), the various Vasanas (desires and passions) and Vrittis (inherent tendencies and inclinations of a creature; his nature and temperaments) as well as the Tattwas (elements) which are fundamental to and inseparable from creation. The innumerable varieties of shades of characters, virtues and qualities that are present in the creature represent these myriad colours that the creator uses to paint his creation. Until at last the Lord stands back and is stumped at the Frankenstein Monster that he has unleashed! Then he decides to call it quits, and this is equivalent to annihilation of the creation. But as a painter he cannot sit quiet; and so starts the process once all over again!

²The *eight forms that Maya takes* are the following—the five elements (such as earth, water, fire, air and space) which form the gross body of creation + the mind + the intellect (which forms the subtle body of creation) + Ahankar (the notion of ego, pride and haughtiness) present in a creature signifying the dominance of Maya.

Actually, a wise man understands that whatever exists in whatever form is nothing but one or the other form of the same universal entity known as Brahm. To take an example, a scientist knows that water in whatever form and colour and shape consists of the same two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen. Further, he also realises that everything is made of atoms and their basic structure consists of sub-atomic particles such as electron, proton, neutron etc. With this erudition and view point, a wise man sees these basic ingredients in all things that he observes around him, because everything is made up of atoms and molecules. But an ordinary man talks of the water of the ocean, of the well, of the drain and of the river etc. He talks of gold, of silver, of wood or of iron, not realising that all consist of the same building block called the 'Atom'. Similarly, due to ignorance a man is deluded into thinking that the gross world that he sees is has an independent existence and it is real. He forgets to analyse its fundamental ingredient which is the pure consciousness that is making it alive. The five elements that are used to make up this world are all perishable and gross, and they are the creation of the mind. The mind itself is perishable because it dies with the body. Then, what is the reason why a man has so much ego and pride in himself and his abilities? It is Maya. It is his ignorance that has held him by his collars, as it were. He forgets that if his true self is imperishable, then how come he dies; if his true self is enlightened and wise, then why he

suffers from so much misery and disillusionment; if his true self is eternal, then why does he have to take a birth and then die? A wise man then begins to ponder why does he treat those entities which are transient, mortal and the cause of so much misery and consternations and confusions as true; why does he not realise that the truth is imperishable and eternal and universal? This is due to the influence of delusions and ignorance created by Maya. This is how Maya keeps everyone trapped under its net.]

4. Knowledge of the truth about Maya can be obtained by 'Dhyan' (i.e. by deep thought and concentration, by contemplation and meditation, by deep insight and pondering). Armed with that knowledge, the spiritual seeker is inspired to move ahead in the direction of overcoming the deluding and misleading effects of Maya that had been causing hindrances in his spiritual pursuit, and as he endeavours to learn more and more about the fundamental truth about Maya, he gradually cultivates abhorrence to and annoyance with it. This helps him to break his fetters of ignorance, thereby liberating him from its clutches and providing him with deliverance. In fact, the effort that a man makes himself is the reason behind the establishment of this world. In other words, the artificial and entrapping world of material comforts and charms exists because a man wants it that way. This is because Maya has had the better of him. Conversely, if the same man can vanquish Maya, he would triumph over delusions and ignorance, and consequentially over the world itself. Then the world won't exist for him (4).

[Note--This world has not come into existence of its own. It is a result of a man's conscious effort to imagine the existence of an entity called the world. It is there because he imagines it to be there, he wants it to be there; he has created it to enjoy it for himself, and he has created it mentally to suit his own comforts, desires and ambitions. Should he decide otherwise, should he realise that he has allowed himself to get trapped in a hallucinating mirage of day-dreaming which has no pith and substance in it, then the world, with all its charms and attractions, all its joys and pleasures as well as all its pains and agonies, would simply vanish. This is because the existence of the world has its origin in the mind which is under the influence of Maya consisting of delusions, falsehoods and ignorance. This profound realisation is what is expected with acquisition of truthful knowledge and erudition; it is the culmination of wisdom and enlightenment; it is the realisation that this world, which is a visible manifestation of the stupendous and magnificent potentials of Maya, is indeed a magical play of the delusion creating powers of this Maya. Truthful knowledge would help the man to remove this dark cloud of ignorance that shrouds the mind and intellect, and instead illuminate the realm of the mind and intellect with the light of realisation about the actual truth of the falsehood of Maya-induced existence which is as illusionary and deceptive as a mirage in a desert.]

5. This Maya is like the mother-cow. She embodies in her self both the causes of birth as well as of death. [The entire creation is caused by the deluding effects of Maya in the first place. Then, it is because of this delusion that a creature thinks that it dies, because actually the Atma, which is the truthful identity of the creature, is eternal and imperishable; it never dies. That is why Maya is both the creator as well as the killer.] The entire creation is like her calf. She is the mother to the entire creation having given birth to it, and as a mother she nourishes and sustains it. [The entire creation, though false and deluding, is so overwhelming that it even misleads the wise ones; even they find it hard not to be enticed by its charms and remain immune from its deluding effects. It is fortunate that some of them do realise the artificiality of the

entire set-up, and they are the ones who find liberation and deliverance from its fetters.] Her complexion has three shades or hues of colours—white (fair; grey; all the light shades), dark (brown, black, yellowish and all shades of colours that are not essentially white) and blood red (or copper colour)¹. She is the one who fulfills all the desires of her devotees. [Here the phrase ‘her devotees’ refers to those persons who have faith in the existence of the world and belief in the truthfulness of Maya. They are those persons who treat Maya as their real mother and guide, which is nevertheless an absolutely erroneous notion.] She is honoured by the title of ‘Vibho’, i.e. one who is omnipresent, all-pervading, almighty, majestic, and the Lord of all that falls within her realm. [Maya is like an empress; she rules over her roost like a queen. All those who are under her command and sway have to live according to her will. In other words, she completely overwhelms those creatures who show respect to Maya or pay the slightest of attention to it.] (5).

[Note--¹These *three colours* represent the three basic qualities, called Gunas, present in all the creatures. Even as an offspring gets the colour of the skin of the race to which it belongs, the inherent characters of all creatures are inherited from their mother, and this mother is Maya. The white colour stands for the best category of qualities called Sata Guna, the red colour stands for the second and medium quality called Raja, and the dark colour stands for the meanest quality called Tama. The word Tam itself means ‘dark’ and it stands for the worst type of qualities leading to sinful and pervert nature in a man which makes his life hellish; the word ‘red’ is a metaphor for anger, vehemence, vengeance, agitations, restlessness, short temper, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy and the other such negative worldly characteristics in a person; the colour ‘white’ stands for peace, tranquility, prosperity, happiness and wisdom, all of which are the characters of noble and gentlemanly persons. Refer also Shewata-shwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 4-5, and Paingalo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3 in this context.]

6. All creatures drink the milk of this cow representing Maya. They find nourishment in it; they are sustained by it; they develop on it. [In other words, even as the body and its general development reflect the type of nourishment that it gets, the nature and temperament of a creature reflect the qualities of its nourisher, the Maya, from whom it has drawn its subtle virtues. The traits that are apparent in a creature are a reflection of its mentor, which is Maya in this case.]

But those who are wise and who have not drunk this milk provided by Maya are enlightened about the irrefutable truth pertaining to the supreme and transcendental Lord who is beyond the purview of Maya. That Lord is different from what Maya has taught her off springs to believe in. That Supreme Being remains aloof from all the illusionary notions and conceptions created by Maya. He nevertheless resides in the bosom of all creatures as their Atma, as their pure conscious soul. From there he enjoys this world created by Maya, but remains indifferent towards and detached from it all. Metaphorically, he drinks the milk given by Maya, but does not derive any nourishment from it; he does not benefit from that milk. In other words, the Atma seems to live and enjoy and participate in all the activities pertaining to this artificial world, but it remains aloof from them; it remains detached and indifferent from the delusions created by this world of artificiality; it has no emotional ties to the world created by Maya (6).

[Note—In short, this verse implies that though the Atma, which is pure consciousness and an image of Brahm, appears to be engulfed and overcome by Maya because the Atma is regarded as the truthful identity of a creature but unfortunately this creature is possessed by Maya. Actually, it is the body and the mind of the creature that are engrossed in this world, and not the enlightened Atma. When this conception is

extended at the macrocosmic level, it implies that the supreme transcendental Brahm does not get involved in the artificial world created by his delusion creating powers known as Maya, though that Brahm pervades throughout this creation uniformly. Therefore, to say that Brahm, and by extension the Atma of the creature, is involved in Maya and its tricks which are denigrating for the creature and which cause hindrance in its liberation and deliverance is a wrong statement based on ignorance and misinterpretation of the factual position.]

7. The supreme transcendental Lord, who has manifested his stupendous and majestic powers and potentials in the form of Maya, is the one who is worshipped by the means of offering of oblations during fire sacrifices by wise and religious persons. It is he whose milk is actually being drunk by ordinary people when they appear to be drinking the milk of the cow representing Maya (as described earlier). [In other words, both the wise people who perform fire sacrifices for their spiritual welfare and the ordinary people who do it for material benefits derived from such religious activities are actually worshipping the same supreme Lord and enjoying his magnanimity and benevolence, though apparently in different ways. For example, the fire sacrifices are often done to fulfill worldly aspirations which are the result of illusions created by Maya—such as in the case of the Ashwamedh or horse sacrifice which was done by kings and emperors to establish their authority over their realms and extend it further, though in fact this world over which they wished to extend and establish their authority is in itself a mirage in the first place—they are not indulged into by the Atma which, as a representative of Brahm, remains a neutral observer to all the happenings around it. But since everything happens not without the wishes of the Supreme Being, it is deemed that he is involved in all the happenings. But the truth is that all this happens due to the independent actions of Maya which keeps the creature deluded and under its blinding spell.]

In fact, by these activities of Maya, the glory of the majestic and supreme authority of creation is enhanced and established further (7).

8. Great souls who are wise, erudite and enlightened treat this world of golden charms as the visible manifestation of the Supreme Being. They eat the sweet fruits of this great and huge Peepal tree (the Fig tree) representing this world but remain indifferent to it. [The sweet fruits are eaten by birds that are only concerned by eating it and are not bothered about the tree and its fruit once their appetite is satisfied. Likewise, the wise man should allow himself to be involved in this world only till the extent it is absolutely necessary and prudent to sustain the body and take care of its basic necessities. He must not get emotionally attached with it just like the bird cited here.]

They live like a Swan that drinks only the milk and discards water. In other words, a wise man should take the benefits offered by the world and discard the rest of its useless ingredients as worthless and disposable.

Since this world is a revelation of Maya, they see the Supreme Being in the Maya itself. In other words, they realise that though the world of charms and comforts which they perceive is false, but since it has been created by the supreme Lord using his Maya as a tool to do so and since the Lord pervades uniformly in it as its very life and soul, what they see or perceive as the world is indeed a visible manifestation of the Lord himself in all his stupendous glory and majesty. So they appear to enjoy this world by their deeds and thoughts. That is, they appear to live an ordinary life, enjoying the world and going about their activities normally, internally they realise that all this is illusory and therefore remain indifferent and dispassionate towards the world and its delusions.

[In other words, they enjoy the world as a sporting activity of the supreme Brahm just like spectators watch a sports event. A truly wise man remains engrossed in the world, cheering it and enjoying its vivid display of charm and fascination, but this involvement is only superficial; it does not affect his inner-self the least just like the spectator who might cheer the team which he backs, but once he gets back home life is back to square one from where it had started. So a wise man understands that the fascination and charms of the world are transient and are meant as a temporary refreshment and a one time affair for the Atma/soul, but they should not, and do not, affect the Atma in the long run. Since the true self of a wise and realised man is his Atma, and not the body which actually enjoys the world, he remains internally serene and un-involved in this world. Just like the events of the sports field have no bearing on the routine daily life of the spectator, the playful activities of the Supreme Lord in the form of this world created by his Maya has no affect upon the Atma which just watches and enjoys and even appears to be involved in the ups and down of life, but internally it never loses its poise and composure, it never loses its bearing. The worldly activities do not affect a wise man in the least.]

All graduates in metaphysics and spiritualism (i.e. those who have a basic knowledge of what the scriptures say about Maya and Brahm) and those who aspire to rise above the mundane are steeped in this erudition and wisdom (8).

9. Those who are expert in the scriptures sing and laud the glories of the same supreme transcendental Lord using the sacred hymns of the scriptures; these hymns are called the 'Richas'. Similarly, great minstrels and bards use adulating verses and eulogizing compositions called 'Stutis', or prayers, to honour the same Lord. They all use varied and manifold means to extol the virtues of the Lord. They employ the hymns of the Vedas for this purpose. These hymns are composed in poetical styles called 'Rathanthar' and 'Brihatsam' (9).

10. The secret and subtle meaning of the Mantras (which are esoteric words or letters vested with ethereal, divine and mystical powers) are synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm himself because they highlight the magnificent virtues and glories of Brahm which would have remained unknown without them. That is why understanding of the Mantras is like studying the Upanishads because the latter explain the subtle and hidden meaning of the various scriptures in simple terms, and the scriptures talk about that supreme entity. [That is, if one is able to understand the meaning of the Mantras, he is able to get an idea of who Brahm is; he is able to visualise that supreme entity in all its glory and majesty when he understands the hidden meaning of the Mantras because these Mantras describe the magnificent virtues of the supreme Lord using codified words. In other words, it is useless to chant the Mantras without understanding their meaning, because then it would be reduced as a mere mechanical exercise with no spiritual benefits for the aspirant.]

These Mantras are read from the Atharva Veda by the wise persons who are descendants of sage Brighu, and are therefore called Bhargavs (10).

11. That supreme transcendental Purush (i.e. the cosmic Male; the Viraat Purush; the Supreme Being) has, inter alia, the following characteristic virtues—he is a perfect renunciate being dispassionate and detached from everything and everyone around him; he is as steady and unmoving, as strong, robust and supporting as a stout, rock-like and sturdy pillar (upon which the entire edifice of this cosmos rests); he has manifested himself as the fruit of the vast cosmic tree (i.e. even as the tree has its

value because of the fruit it offers, the world is attractive because of its 'lively' nature, its vibrancy and charm, its enjoyments and pleasures, and this life of the cosmos is there because of the Supreme Being present in it as its very soul and spirit); he is the bearer as well as the driver of the cart symbolising this world; he is well endowed with all the noble and virtuous qualities called 'Satoguna' (i.e. those virtues that are marked by righteousness, auspiciousness and nobility of thoughts and actions) and is absolutely free from the denigrating and demeaning effects of the opposite characteristics which are collectively called 'Tamoguna' (i.e. those qualities that are inauspicious, unrighteous, ignoble and lowly in their essential form and nature); and who is almighty, universal, omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing as well as infinite, eternal and extensive in form and nature (11).

12. That supreme Lord called Bhagwan¹ is a personification of Kaal (time and circumstance), Pran (the vital life-infusing wind in the body of the creature which makes the body live and move and show all signs of life; the breath and life of a living creature) and Mritu (death and conclusion of anything and anyone). That supreme Lord represents all the creatures of this creation; or the same Lord has manifested himself in the form of all the creatures in this creation. He has taken the form of Maheshwar (Lord Shiva or the great Lord who is the lord of all) who himself has other forms also, such as Bhava, Rudra, Ugra etc. In fact, the Supreme Being represents both the godly as well as the un-godly characteristics in creation (because there is nothing in existence that goes beyond the purview of that Lord, there is nothing that is *not* one or the other manifestation of the same Lord called Bhagwan, and therefore everything, whether good or bad, whether righteous or unrighteous, must be one or the other revelation of that supreme entity) (12).

[Note—¹The word *Bhagwan* has two parts—'Bhag' and 'Wan'. The 2nd part 'Wan' means 'one who possesses', while the 1st part 'Bhag' means 'one who is like the receptacle or womb' that harbours the following six qualities or virtues—(1) all majesty, powers, wealth, fortune, opulence, flourish, supremacy, sway, dominance, glory, grandeur, omnipotence and other divine faculties in existence (सम्पूर्ण ऐश्वर्य—complete Aishwarya); (2) all righteousness, probity, propriety, virtuous and noble conduct, collectively called Dharma (सम्पूर्ण धर्म); (3) all fame, glory, majesty and renown (सम्पूर्ण यश—complete Yash); (4) all wealth, prosperity, pomp and circumstance, prestige, splendour, glory and honour, as well as all other factors associated with those qualities mentioned in serial no. 1-3 above (सम्पूर्ण श्री—complete Sree); (5) all knowledge, erudition, wisdom, skills, expertise and enlightenment (सम्पूर्ण ज्ञान—complete Gyan); and (6) complete renunciation, detachment and dispassion (सम्पूर्ण वैराग्य—complete Vairagya). Hence, anyone who is endowed with the above six noble and exemplary qualities is called Bhagwan.

The supreme Brahm—known as Purush or the Viraat Purush who is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm even as a man is the microcosmic counterpart of that Viraat Purush with his immaculate and conscious Atma as the corresponding counterpart of Brahm—has the noble qualities listed above that makes him a unique and a matchless Being. It is possible to possess a majority of these qualities in any living being, but it is not possible to have them in perfection at both the micro as well as the macro levels. This is what makes Brahm so unique—he is perfect and wholesome at both the levels, micro as well as macro.]

13. That supreme transcendental Being is worthy of being honoured, revered and worshipped by all (the living creatures of this creation) in his manifold forms as the supreme Lord, as the Prajapati (the caretaker of the subjects of creation; Lord Brahma the creator), as the Viraat Purush (the macrocosmic, all-incorporating and all-pervading form of the gross body of that Supreme Being), and as the various patron Gods who preside over the various elements of creation such as water etc. His vast and infinite form is made known through the Atharva Veda (i.e. this Veda describes these macrocosmic vast and infinite forms of that Supreme Being and the methods of worship of these forms) (13).

14. Some wise ones call the supreme Purush as a personification of the twenty-sixth 'Tattwa'¹ (essential element or principle), while others call him as representing the twenty-seventh. Those who are expert in the Atharva-shir (Upanishad) regard that supreme Purush as being 'Nirgun Sankhya Purush'² (i.e. the supreme transcendental Lord who has no attributes and forms, and who has been expounded by the Sankhya philosophy) (14).

[Note—¹The word *Tattwa* has many connotations as follows—(i) the true, essential and primary or fundamental aspect of anything; (ii) the elementary reality; (iii) the true or real state; (iv) the primary Prakriti-Nature; (v) the truthful nature of the Atma or soul of individual creature at the micro level as well as that at the macro level of the Atma which is universal, all-pervading, omnipresent, transcendental and almighty Soul of the entire creation; (vi) the 'Mana' consisting of the mind and the heart complex; (vii) the Sun; (viii) the universal, eternal elements that form the basic building blocks of the entire creation.

(a) So, according to Sankhya Shastra, there are *twenty-five fundamental Elements or Tattwas* as follows—Purush (the primal cosmic Male; the Viraat Purush), Prakriti (primal Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25.

According to Mahopanishad, 1/4–9 of Sam Veda tradition, these twenty-five elements or Tattwas are the following—five organs of perception (ear, nose, tongue, eye, skin) + five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals, excretory) + one Mana (mind) + one Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) + one Pran (the vital life-giving breath; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life) + one Atma (soul) + one Buddhi (intelligence, wisdom, discrimination) + five Perceptions (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch) + five Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air, space) = twenty-five elements.

The twenty-sixth Tattwa or Element is 'Hiranya-garbh', the cosmic subtle body of creation, or the cosmic golden egg from which Viraat had emerged. The twenty-seventh Tattwa or Element is known as 'Ishwar', the macrocosmic causal body of creation. Obviously, all these elements are junior to the primary source called the Supreme Being or Brahm. Therefore, the Supreme Being or Brahm is neither the creature nor the Purush; he is neither the visible world nor the invisible creation taken independently. He is beyond such limiting definitions. Therefore, he is has certain qualities that do not fall within the ambit of ordinary creation; he has some extraordinary elements that are beyond the realm of comprehension.

By saying that the supreme Purush is the twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh element, this Upanishad implies that he is beyond the definition of all those entities that come under the purview of this creation made up of the twenty-five elements. In other words, that Supreme Being is not even the Viraat Purush as is mistakenly understood; in fact the Viraat Purush is the macrocosmic gross body of that Supreme Being, the latter being the primary source from where even the Viraat has emerged. Therefore, 'he' (i.e. the Supreme Being) is much superior to all that come within the ambit of 'creation', including the Viraat Purush.

²The word *Nirgun* means one without any qualities, characters and attributes. This is because the supreme Lord is so subtle, sublime and enigmatic that all definitions fall short of even defining a fraction of his true form and nature. He is the one who has created everything, both the truthful ones as well as the false ones, and the magical part is that he is the 'spirit' of all of them—i.e. even those things that are false, such as the mirage seen in a hot desert, have their existence and the quality of being 'false' because that enigmatic Purush is subtly present in those false things as their quality of 'falsehood and illusion'. If this is true for those things that are false, then obviously those things that are actually there, those which are actually 'true' are definitely empowered and vested with the stupendous glories of that 'truthful Purush'.

Sankhya Shastra is one of the six great schools of Indian philosophy. It was first propounded by sage Kapil. It describes the origin of the cosmos from Brahm who created the macrocosmic first Male called Purush and his female counterpart, the Prakriti (Mother Nature), who are the basic cause of this vast and myriad creation. The individual male and female human beings are the microcosmic forms of that macrocosmic Purush and Prakriti. It is their union which resulted in this cosmos. Their offspring were—Ahankar (pride, ego), Buddhi (intelligence, wisdom, mind), the five perceptions (of smell, hearing, touch, taste and sight) forming the subtle body of the creature, the five elements (space, wind, fire, water, earth), the ten sense organs (five organs of perception—ear, nose, tongue, eye and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genitals), and the mind-heart complex called the 'Mana', which together formed the gross body of the creature, and the invisible Atma which resides in the causal body. These are the twenty five basic constituents of creation. It further postulates that Brahm created Nature (cosmos) because it allowed itself to be covered or mired by the three Gunas—'Sata' meaning righteousness and virtuousness which are the best and noblest of qualities, 'Raj' meaning worldly passions and desires which are the medium or mediocre qualities leading to worldly desires, and 'Tama' meaning evils, sins and other mean mentalities leading to perversions and vices. The Purush, though he remains aloof, still gets shackled or attached to Prakriti, the creation, because of these three Gunas which act as ropes or strings that tie him down. Breaking his habits is tantamount to liberation and deliverance from this bondage, and it is called Mukti. The three Gunas are the causes of the myriad temperaments, natures, thought patterns and behaviours of all the creatures, because they have all these three qualities or virtues in them, though they vary in ratio or proportion. These three Gunas are also present in Mother Nature, giving rise to a populace which is so varied and diametrically opposite to each other, even virtually getting at each other's throat, because of the infinite possibilities created by their mixing in different proportions to mould the innate nature, inclinations and temperaments of a creature.]

15. Some scholars regard the supreme Purush as being an embodiment of all the twenty-four 'Tattwas'¹ (essential elements or principles of creation) combined, some regard him as a 'Vyakta' entity (i.e. that which is revealed in the form of the visible world; that which is manifest and discernible), while there are some others who treat him as 'Avyakta' (i.e. that which is invisible, un-manifest and imperceptible but nevertheless all-pervading, ubiquitous and universal. [It ought to be noted here that the concept of Prakriti² is intricately woven into the fabric of creation and conforms to both the views of Avyakta (un-manifest) and Vyakta (manifest). At the subtle level, Prakriti is Avyakta, while at the gross level it is Vyakta. The word would also therefore have two applications. See note.]

There are some who treat him as being of a 'dual nature' (such as a Jiva or a living creature and the supreme Brahm or the transcendental Lord from whom the entire creation originated), while others treat him as 'non-dual' in essence (i.e. they regard the entire creation as nothing but one or the other revelation of Brahm; they regard everything as Brahm; there is nothing that is not Brahm)³.

Similarly, some regard him as having three forms as the Trinity Gods (i.e. as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder), while there are some who treat him as having 'five forms' (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti representing the cosmic energy and power of creation, sustenance and destruction, and Ganesh who is regarded as the most revered God and is worshipped first during any religious ceremony to overcome any hurdles for he is the patron God for success and achievements in any endeavour) (15).

[Note—¹According to Harvansha Puran, 14840, and Mahabharat, xii, 11242, there are *twenty-four* basic elements or *Tattwas*. These twenty-four fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the essential ingredients which go in to make up the body of a creature, and they are—(a) Prakriti (nature, inherent tendencies and inclinations, the fundamental truth about anything that decide its character and existential mode); (b) Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination); (c) Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness); (d) the eleven organs (five organs of perceptions—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue; five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory; one organ of intelligence—mind); and (e) the five vital Prans (the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apaana or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaana or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyan or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaana or the wind that helps to rise); and (f) the five perceptions (sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing) bringing the total to = 1+1+1+11+5+5 = 24.

²*Prakriti*-- The word basically means 'nature' with all its connotations. The Chambers dictionary defines it as the power that creates and regulates the world; the power of growth; the established order of things; the cosmos; the external world especially that untouched by man; the inherent qualities in anything that makes it what it is; the essence; the being; the constitution; a kind or order; naturalness; normal feeling; conformity to truth or reality; the inborn mind; the character, instinct or disposition; the vital power; the course of life; the nakedness of truth; the primitive undomesticated condition; the strength or substance of anything; a deity personifying some force of physical nature.

Sir Monier Monier-Williams, in his encyclopedic Sanskrit-English dictionary describes it thus—'making or placing before or at first'.

The word Prakriti has many connotations, viz. the original or natural or basic form or condition of anything; the original or primary nature, character, condition, constitution, temperament, disposition; the fundamental form or shape or essence or pattern or standard or model, rule; Mother Nature which has the active physical natural forces that are responsible for unfolding the creation, its sustenance and annihilation; something that is inherent, innate, genuine, unaltered, unadulterated, basic, normal, bare, naked, crude, integral and stripped of all pretensions; the fundamental pattern, form, standard and model upon which the rest of the things are based; the crude or basic or root or seed form of any word, and by extension of anything expressed; that which decides the existential mode of anything; the coefficient, the multiplier of any fundamental element.

As inherent nature and temperament of a creature, it determines the way the world behaves and thinks; it determines the basic character of the creature and the creation as a whole because the individual creature is but a single unit of the creation.

The word Prakriti also refers to the 'personified will of the Supreme Being in the creation', and it therefore is synonymous with the powers of the Supreme Being personified as Mother Nature in whose womb the entire creation has revealed itself. It is deified forces of Nature and revealed as different renowned and powerful Goddesses.

The Prakriti represents the cosmic creative will of the creator that has revealed itself as the primary female aspect of creation which is known as 'Shakti', while its male aspect is known as the 'Viraat Purush'. The Shakti is the active ingredient or force that creates and regulates everything, while the primary entity or Being whose will this Shakti is implementing is called Brahm who remains passive.

According to the Purans, this Prakriti or Nature has been personified as different Goddesses, while Brahm has been known as Viraat Purush in the terminology of Vedanta or the Upanishads, and Vishnu in the Purans. The Shakti is the female aspect of Purush, and is considered as inseparable from him; in fact they are two halves of the same Brahm. In order to create, Brahm revealed himself in these two primary forces which revealed themselves as the cosmos or Nature. As the different inherent tendencies of a creature, the forces of creation came to be known as Sattva, Raj and Tam which determines and regulates the continuous cycle of creation, sustenance and conclusion. The Purush is the male aspect while his female counterpart is the Prakriti. Since a man resides in this world, he is surrounded by Nature which casts its shadow upon him. All the maverick tricks that Mother Nature knows create an impression upon a man. He is enthralled and so overwhelmed by the deception created by Nature that he forgets about the falsehoods of what he sees, as well as about the truthful nature of his own pure self. He is deluded by false impressions so much so that they appear to be true to him. Consequentially, he drifts along in the swift currents created by those delusions. He acquires the colours of Prakriti without realising the truth about its falsehood.

According to Sankhya Shastra, Prakriti is the original producer of the material world consisting of the three Gunas or fundamental qualities that are inherent in all the creatures and they decide the character and temperament of that creature depending upon the dominance of one quality over the other two. These three Gunas are—(i) 'Sattwa', or those which are auspicious and righteous and noble, (ii) 'Raja', or worldly qualities marked by such notions as having passions, desires, greed etc.

and (iii) ‘Tama’, or those qualities that are ‘dark’ by nature, such as those that are categorised as sinful and pervert, leading to a creature’s moral downfall.

³There are umpteen numbers of Upanishads exclusively devoted to the exposition of the concept of Brahm because Brahm is central to the philosophy expounded upon and elucidated by all of them. Some of them however stand out by their name itself—e.g. Brahm Vidya Upanishad, Brahm Upanishad, Brahm Bindu Upanishad. But since the study of Brahm is the focal point of all the Upanishads, no matter to which genre they belong, this topic is discussed in all of them to a lesser or greater degree. Refer also to Niralmabo Upanishad, verse no. 6 which attempts to precisely define this term.]

16. There are innumerable wise and erudite ones who treat Brahm as the supreme Authority that is most holy, pure and divine as well as magnificent, majestic and powerful. This Brahm uniformly pervades throughout the creation, right from those forms that are highly evolved and highly conscious of their exalted existence (i.e. those who are most wise and enlightened, those who are highly placed in the hierarchy of evolutionary ladder) down to those forms which are lowly and gross (in their form and birth, in their nature and mental development etc.) (16).

17. This entire animate as well as inanimate world is incorporated in that supreme authority; or in other words, there is nothing that exists which is beyond the purview of that supreme authority. Brahm completely envelops the entire creation from all sides; Brahm pervades uniformly and universally in this creation. Even as all the rivers finally fall into the ocean and vanish in it for good, the entire creation would ultimately revert to its primary source, the Brahm, and merge with it to become one with Brahm and lose its independent existence and identity (17).

18. Even as a bubble of water is created from water and falls back and vanishes in the water once again, the entire gamut of creation consisting of the animate as well as the inanimate world would ultimately disappear, at the time of their dissolution, into the original source from which they appeared in the first place. Those who are knowledgeable and scholarly call that ultimately entity or primary source from which everything emerged and in which it would finally fall back to vanish for ever as Brahm (18).

19. That mystical and enigmatic Supreme Being is established as the pure consciousness in all living creatures, and is firmly enthroned in their bosoms/hearts as a ‘Kshetrageya’¹. As such, he is all-knowing and omniscient in as much as he knows even the innermost thoughts of the creature; he is aware of even those thoughts that are still in their formative stage; he knows of those thoughts that are top secret and the creature might be reluctant to express them at all. In short, nothing is hidden from the supreme Authority of the subtle realm consisting of the mind and heart of the creature. Those who are wise, erudite and learned, constantly, persistently and with perseverance ‘see’ (i.e. visualise, realise, become enlightened about, contemplate and meditate upon) that infinitely almighty, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal, magnificent, supreme and enigmatic Authority everywhere in all its glorious splendour and majesty (19).

[Note—¹The word *Kshetrageya* literally means the king-emperor of a particular realm; the authority that exercises control and is responsible for that realm which falls within its jurisdiction. Such a person must be necessarily well conversant with the area

which comes within his jurisdiction so as to enable him to effectively exercise control and vigil. In the context of the Upanishads, the Atma or soul, which is personified consciousness and enlightenment, is that authority called the Kshetrageya, while the body of the creature is the realm over which this authority exercises influence and control. This is at the individual level and is therefore the microcosmic concept of Kshetrageya, while the same concept when applied at the macrocosmic level of the cosmos is true for Brahm. Even as a king is expected to be wise, erudite, enlightened, learned, prudent, judicious, unbiased, righteous, noble in his thoughts, actions and deeds, magnanimous, kind and compassionate when required but ruthless and stern at other times, and have an independent view of things which are not tainted by sycophantic adulation, the Atma too is expected to be a wise guide and guardian for the creature. Just as the subjects become out of control if the king become indulgent in worldly pleasures and fritters the state treasury in pursuit of carnal gratification, a shortcoming that is exploited by his enemies, the Atma should also be alert and careful for such pitfalls that would denigrate its divine and righteous state and lead to the moral and spiritual degeneration of the Atma's ward, the creature. If unfortunately that comes to happen, enemies in the form of various worldly blemishes and evils attack the creature and besiege it from all the sides. The creature is tormented no end like the subjects of a kingdom whose king has fallen from his exalted stature, who becomes unrighteous and indulgent, and has not lived up to his duties and obligations.]

20. Those wise and enlightened persons who realise the truth about the sublime, eclectic, holy, divine and magnificent virtues, qualities and characteristics of that supreme transcendental enigmatic Brahm, remain ever engrossed in his thoughts. This is tantamount to their losing their own individuality, and instead they dissolve themselves in the object of their contemplation and meditation, which is Brahm. In other words, they become what they think! They become one with and inseparable from their 'great self' which is the supreme Brahm whose fraction or image they represent as an individual. This realisation fills them with a sense of fulfillment and eternal peace because now such wise and realised people understand that there is uniformity between their own 'true self' and the pure consciousness that resides in their bosom as their Atma or soul, and that this Atma is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm personified. Further, they realise that their Atma or 'pure or true self' is the same as the Atma of the rest of the creatures in this creation, and therefore the entire creation is nothing but the manifold manifestation of one single truth, and that 'truth' is Brahm. This verily fills them with ecstasy and bliss.

In this state of blissfulness and peace where everything becomes one single factor called the 'truthful Brahm', they prefer to live anonymously. Though not apparent outwardly, such people are truly realised and a personification of Brahm; they have become one like Brahm. They have not only become 'self-realised' but also 'Brahm-realised'. For them, all senses of duality, of 'this and that', of 'you and me', of 'your and mine', of 'truth and false' become redundant. It's a state marked by high degree of equanimity, equity, evenness and calmness of mind and demeanours. There is no restlessness, no agitation, no perplexity, no confusion, and no consternation of any kind whatsoever. There is complete tranquility, serenity and peace. Therefore, they become reverend and honourable; they become as graceful, well adored, majestic and worthy of respect and worship as Brahm personified. Verily, this is the truth propounded and elucidated by this Upanishad! Amen! (20).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—8

NIRALMABA UPANISHAD

The word Niralamb is made up of two words—viz. ‘Ni’ and ‘Alamban’. The second word Alamban refers to a support or prop upon which one depends or relies or take recourse to in order to reach one’s goal, while the first word Ni refers to a negation of the first. Hence, in this Upanishad it is emphasised that one has to be wary of misconceived and ill-advised methods of spiritual liberation and deliverance usually in vogue which can do more harm than good to him if not interpreted and employed judiciously and correctly along with the required intellectual level of wisdom and erudition as well as spiritual guidance needed for the purpose. It would be like the case of taking the apparently right medicine without correct medical diagnosis and supervision, in a wrong dose and wrong time, and without observing proper dietary and other precautions.

A wise spiritual aspirant is advised to overcome his reliance on all external means of obtaining spiritual upliftment, to break free from all misconceived and erroneous advice given to him previously if he sincerely desires spiritual liberation and deliverance for himself. No external prop is actually needed and can never become a cause for his true spiritual emancipation and salvation. Genuine Brahm realisation would not need any outside support and aid to prove its truthfulness and worthiness.

This Upanishad defines the various metaphysical terms in a crisp, succinct and brief way. It starts by asking questions and then goes on to answer each one of them, and these answers define those terms in a precise manner. It defines, inter alia, such terms as Brahm, Jiva, Prakriti, Parmatma, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, the different Gods (such as Indra, Yam, Surya, Chandra etc.), the non-Gods (such as demons, Satan, evil spirits etc.), humans and animals, the different castes and classes in society, sorrows and happiness, what constitutes freedom and bondage, the distinctive features of a Guru (teacher) and his disciple, a wise man and a fool, what is worthy of acceptance and what should be forsaken, who is a true renunciate called a Sanyasi, etc. The remarkable thing is all these terms have been explained very briefly as if this Upanishad wishes to round off the elaborate discussions of other Upanishads which endeavour to elucidate on these topics in great detail, and instead it presents their essential meaning and fundamental aspects in a nutshell. It therefore acts as a sort of reference hand book or a concise reference pocket book for spiritual aspirants.

An identical Upanishad appears in Krishna Yajur Vedic tradition and it is called Kaivalya Upanishad which elucidates the same principles propounded in this one. This latter Upanishad appears as chapter no.4 of this humble author’s anthology of Upanishads belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda as part of this series.

Refer also to Ishavasya Upanishad which is Chapter 1 of this volume.

-----Shanti Paath-----

1. OM salutations! I pay my obeisance to and bow reverentially before Lord Shiva who is the Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide) of the whole world, is an embodiment of eternal truth, pure consciousness and infinite bliss—salutations to him! He is free from all artificiality and delusions, is calm, tranquil, serene and peaceful, he needs no support, base or shelter for himself because he is self-supporting, and he is a personification of such eclectic virtues as divinity, energy, radiance, splendour, glory and majesty. Salutations to such a magnificent Lord!

A person who takes the shelter or support of the supreme Authority which needs no support for itself (i.e. which is so potent and powerful, so majestic and authoritative that it does not need any support for its own existence and sustenance, and therefore is competent and able to support others, because only the one who is self-sufficient and possesses self-strength can hope to help others), and abandons the support of and stops to seek succour from the world which is not independent and relies upon something else to support it, is a true and honest Sanyasi (who is a renunciate who has forsaken the deluding world and its illusive charms) as well as a true and sincere Yogi (ascetic, hermit). Such a person is the one who achieves the exalted state of 'Kaivalya'¹, which is the ultimate form of liberation and deliverance whereby the creature's own individual self is irretrievably lost and merged with the pure cosmic self, which is another way of saying that the microcosmic individual Atma of the creature has dissolved its self into and become one with the macrocosmic universal Soul of the cosmos, i.e. with Brahm. This is the highest level of emancipation and salvation that a creature can hope to achieve, and it gives the person immense peace and happiness; he attains the state of blissfulness that is the hallmark of those who have no worry in this world (1).

[Note—¹Kaivalya—The word *Kaivalya* means the 'only one' or the non-dual state. It is a state of existence which is similar to the state of Samadhi in which the man goes about his daily life doing his chores in a routine way without getting emotionally involved in them and even remaining totally oblivious of what he is doing. He remains totally submerged in his inner self and thoughts. He appears in a virtual trance-like state of existence usually observed in realised ascetics and great philosophers. People regard such men as absent minded, but they are so much absorbed in themselves that they are not concerned with others think of them. For them, the external world ceases to exist though they physically live in it and interact with it. This Kaivalya form of existence is tantamount to having emancipation while a man still has a body, because in this state he is free from all sorts of sufferings, worries and sorrows as well as all forms of attachments, entanglements and involvements with the artificial and deluding world that are the usual features of a worldly man submerged in world's entrapping charm. This state is comparable to liberation of the soul upon death when it is physically liberated from the bondages of the limitations imposed by the gross body; the only difference being that in the former case the man is alive and enjoys the body, while in the latter case he sheds the burden of the body. The Kaivalya state is considered superior because such a man lives a life of happiness and contentedness; he never suffers from any worldly miseries and worries, he treats the world around him as of no consequence, and remains indifferent to its deluding effects and their entanglements. On the other hand, the ordinary man might find emancipation upon death, but his life is a burden while he is still alive in it. Such a man has not truly understood the teachings of the scriptures; he has not understood the spirit of spiritualism, for their main aim is to give

peace and tranquility to the tormented soul and help in its liberation from the deluding effects of the body and the world. This concept has been elaborately described in Muktiko-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition as well as in Sarva Saar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

According to Yoga Upanishads, Kaivalya Mukti is achieved even when the creature is alive because it primarily involves total realisation and disassociation from the body and the world with which it has to interact. When the seeker dies, he simply abandons his mortal coil, the gross body consisting of the different sense organs, and merges his Pran or the Atma with the macrocosm outside. Since the word 'Kaivalya' means 'the only', this form of Mukti refers to the realisation of the one and the only spiritual Truth which is the absolute and irrefutable Reality in creation.

Since the Advaitya school believes in only one end of the soul— its merger with the parent Soul— they emphasis 'Kaivalya Mukti' as the only form of salvation and emancipation. The word Kaivalya itself means 'only', thereby implying that there is no other forms of Mukti except the one when the Atma abandons the gross body which is like a shackle for it, and then inseparably and indistinguishably merging with the supreme transcendental Soul of the cosmos. This is the eclectic and holistic form of Mukti extolled by the Upanishads. This Mukti means the dissolution or merger of the individual soul with the parent supreme Soul. The realisation that the soul of the individual creature is the same as the cosmic Soul residing in all the creatures of this world, to see the supreme Brahm as a resident of the inner-self of the individual creature as its Atma, and identifying oneself with that Atma which is synonymous with that supreme Brahm, which in turn leads to the recognition of non-dual nature of the soul of the creature and the supreme Soul of the cosmos, realising therefore that there is no notion as 'duality' when dealing with divinity and the supreme transcendental being called 'Brahm' vis-à-vis the creature, and other such basic tenets of Vedanta are the foundation upon which Kaivalya Mukti rests.]

2. In order to dispel the different spiritual hurdles and overcome the various mental confusions and perplexities that confound the ignorant people of this mundane world, I would now raise queries and answer them myself one by one to remove all doubts and put to rest all confusions (2).

3. What is Brahm (the Supreme Being)? Who is Ishwar (Lord God)? Who is Jiva (the living creature, the living being)? What is Prakriti (nature, habit, the original source of everything)? Who is Parmatma (the subtle and sublime supreme Soul)? Who are Brahma (the creator of visible world), Vishnu (the sustainer) and Rudra (Shiva; the concluder)? Who is Indra (the king of Gods)? Who is Yam (the God of death)? Who is Sun? Who is Moon? Who are the Gods? Who are the non-Gods (such as the demons and monsters)? Who are the evil spirits, phantoms, Satan etc.? Who is a human? Who is a woman? What are animals? What are inanimate things? Who are Brahmins and others? What is a caste? What is meant by deed and what is meant by not doing deeds? What are Gyan (truthful knowledge and erudition, wisdom and enlightenment) and Agyan (ignorance and the lack of truthful knowledge, wisdom and erudition)? What is sorrow and anguish (Dukh), and what is happiness and joy (Sukh)? What are heaven and hell? What is meant by freedom and bondage? Who is worthy of Upasana (i.e. who is worthy of having devotion and dedication for; of

worshipping, adoring, honouring and revering)? Who is a true disciple? Who is wise, adroit, knowledgeable, erudite, expert and scholarly? Who is stupid, foolish and idiotic; who has a low intellect and deemed to be good for nothing? What is meant by 'being demonic'? What is Tapa (austerity, penance, sufferance of hardships)? What is called the 'supreme stature'? What is acceptable and what not? Who is a true Sanyasi (renunciate)?

By asking these fundamental questions, the Upanishadic sage sought to explain the various concepts through the medium of specific answers to these individual queries (3).

4. Now the sage begins his discourse—'The one who has 'Mahattatwa' as one of its qualities—i.e. one who is majestic, magnificent, glorious, indescribable, stupendous and enigmatic in all respects, who has an essential form that is colossus, all-inclusive, majestic, macrocosmic, glorious, magnificent and beyond description, a form that is of stupendous proportions and is of measureless potentials, the one who is the progenitor and creator of everything in this creation, including even the negative traits of Mada (arrogance, haughtiness) and Ahankar (ego, pride) which are subtly and invariably present in all the living creatures of this creation, the one who incorporates all the essential ingredients that constitute the vast universe, such as the so-called five elements consisting of earth, water, energy or fire, wind or air, and sky or space (Prithivi, Apaha, Tej, Vayu and Akash respectively), the one who can be experienced and witnessed in the form of rewards of doing deeds (Karma) and acquiring truthful knowledge suffused with wisdom and enlightenment (Gyan), the one who is unique, un-parallel and one of his kind, the one who has no defining attributes and qualities that can limit his definition and scope, the one who is beyond the purview of quality and title, the one who is almighty and omnipotent, the one who has no beginning or end, the one who is pure, immaculate, pristine and divine, the one who is 'Shiva', i.e. is truth, beauty, auspiciousness, renunciation, peace and bliss personified, the one who is beyond the purview of the three Gunas (the Sattva--noble, Raj--mediocre, and Tam—lowest and mean qualities that are inherently present in all the creatures of this creation in varying proportions), the one who is so indescribable, enigmatic and mysterious that he is beyond the reach of speech (i.e. it is not possible to assign words to describe him; the speech fails to find words to define him), and is the one who is pure consciousness personified—such a supreme, transcendental, enigmatic, absolutely indescribable and unqualified entity is known as 'Brahm'.

Now 'Ishwar' is being defined. The above described Brahm is known as Ishwar when, inter alia, he uses his most stupendous, mysterious and glorious powers and potentials of creation, called Prakriti or Nature, to create this magnificent creation. Having thus created it, he quietly, secretly and imperceptibly, but certainly and authoritatively sneaks into the creation to become a part of it and remain firmly ensconced in it; he becomes universally and uniformly present in it; he pervades throughout it in an invisible, subtle, universal form (as the Atma or soul or the fundamental identity or the essence of the entire creation). In this intangible and sublime macrocosmic form or supreme regulating capacity, it is the Authority that controls the creator Brahma, the sustainer Vishnu, and the annihilator Rudra (Shiva). In effect, this Ishwar controls the three Trinity Gods who stand for the three fundamental aspects or phases of creation, i.e. beginning, development and conclusion.

This Ishwar controls the mind and intellect by symbolically exercising authority over Brahma because the latter God is considered the wise patriarch who

created the vast repository of knowledge in the form of the Vedas. This Ishwar controls the organs of the body by symbolically exercising authority over Vishnu because the body does so many deeds and undertakes so many constructive activities to sustain life in a creature as well as the fact that the body of the creature (here specially referring to the man) is an image of the Viraat Purush, the subtler form of Vishnu at the macro level of creation. In fact, this Viraat Purush had created all the Gods from different parts of his body, and when he created man in his own image, these Gods took up residence in the corresponding organ of the body of the man. [Refer Aitereyo Upanishad of Rig Veda tradition.]

Similarly, this Ishwar inculcates renunciation and dispassion in a creature by exercising authority over Shiva who is an incarnate renunciate, and at the same time it creates such conditions that impel a creature to cause its own destruction by becoming evil, sinful, pervert and lowly as symbolised by the characteristic virtue of Shiva in his angry form of Rudra to cause destruction and death.

In short, this Ishwar or the supreme Lord is that authority who resides in the bosom of the cosmic body of creation at the macro level as its controlling centre. In terms of Vedanta, Ishwar is the macrocosmic Atma or soul of the creation. In other words, Ishwar is the causal body of the vast cosmos in which the supreme Soul of the creation resides (4).

[Note—1. The difference between *Brahm* and *Ishwar* is very clear here. While *Brahm* is the pure consciousness or Atma or Soul of creation, *Ishwar* is the causal body in which this *Brahm* resides at the cosmic or macro level. This *Ishwar* is the sum-total of all the causal bodies that form the composite structure called the vast creation. When the creation came into being, this structure was replicated at the micro level.

2. The mind-intellect of an individual creature is called the subtle body of the creation at the micro level. When we talk about *Ishwar*, we are dealing with the concept at the macro level, and this macrocosmic subtle body is called *Hiranyagarbha*, a word used as a synonym for *Brahma* the creator as well as for *Vishnu* the sustainer in various Purans. A single word when applied to different contexts assumes different meaning. So, without going into dichotomous discussions which would only add to confusion, let us concentrate on the fundamental meaning of ‘*Ishwar*’ instead of getting bogged down by too much technicalities of what is written in which Puran. Refer also to *Ishavasya Upanishad* in the context of the term ‘*Ishwar*’.]

5. The question ‘Who is a Jiva’ is being answered now. When that *Ishwar*—who has assumed the various cosmic forms that are subtle and sublime, and which have such names as *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Rudra* and *Indra*—erroneously begins to believe that it has a gross body with a specific name and form, having certain qualities and characters, it becomes what is known as a *Jiva* or a living creature having a body and attributes (in this mortal world). Although the *Ishwar* is immutable, universal, uniform and one single indivisible supreme entity, although it is pure consciousness characterised and defined by such notions as ‘That is I’ (i.e. the supreme transcendental Being is no one else but me), but when it fallaciously thinks that it has a gross body having innumerable forms and shapes, it becomes a ‘creature’ or a *Jiva* because creatures of this mortal world have different forms and names, each distinct from the other, and each having an independent existence, unique characters and its own identity. This is due to the presence of ignorance and delusions about the truth (5).

[Note—As we note here, the creature is none else but the supreme Lord called *Ishwar* who has come under the influence of ignorance and delusions. Therefore, if the creature overcomes this hurdle, that is if it overcomes ignorance about its true nature and essence that it is the Supreme Being in a gross body, he would rise above the

mundane and become enlightened to the fact that his true identity is not the gross body but his immaculate self which is pure consciousness called the Atma, and that this Atma is the supreme Soul of the cosmos personified. This is true self-realisation; it is knowing the 'true self'; it is realising that there no difference between the true self and Ishwar who is the Lord of the creation, and if one does not overcome ignorance and delusions then he would face the same fate as faced by the Lord himself—i.e. he would fall into the trap of delusions and remain engrossed and submerged in this quagmire known as the 'world'.]

6. What is Prakriti? That which creates this colourful canvas of creation in association with the supreme transcendental Brahm, that which derives this stupendous ability and magnificent potentials of conjuring up this infinitely vast and most fascinating, this multifarious and endless creation of all possible hues and shades because of its association with Brahm, that which represents, personifies and exhibits the powers of intelligence, wisdom, skills, craftsmanship and expertise that Brahm possesses (as is evident in the fact of it being able to create this world literally from nothing, and injecting it with stupendous magical powers of self propagation and self sustenance leading to eternity and perpetuity that Brahm only possesses)—such an enigmatic and indescribable entity, which is often said to be synonymous with its principal source Brahm, is called Prakriti (6).

[Note—The concept of *Prakriti* has been elaborately described as a note to verse no. 15 of Mantriko-panishad which is chapter no. 7 of this book.]

7. The question 'Who or what is Parmatma' is being answered now. Brahm is called the supreme transcendental Soul or Parmatma because he remains above and beyond the purview of such gross and perishable entities as the body consisting of equally gross and perishable ingredients (7).

[Note—It is a established doctrine of the Upanishads that Atma, which is a micro form of the Brahm residing in the individual creature, is separate and independent of the gross body of the creature; it is pure conscious and the truthful self while the body is merely the habitat of that Atma while it lives in this world to suffer because of its past deeds done due to its ignorance. We have seen previously in verse no. 5 above that even the supreme Lord called Ishwar has to suffer if he allows himself to be dominated by ignorance and delusions, so there is no wonder if the Atma has to likewise undergo punishment for its delusions and ignorance by taking a birth and then dying, although such notions as 'birth and death' are applicable to the gross body and do not actually apply to the Atma which is eternal and infinite. But since the ignorance-influenced creature thinks that its body is its true identity, and since the Atma is the true self of the creature, it logically follows that what the creature thinks and does is done by the Atma. This paradox—that the Atma is independent, pure and dispassionate but at the same time it is convicted of doing deeds that are actually not done by it but done by the body of the creature—is caused by ignorance, and this in its wake creates delusions that trap the Atma into the snare of life and death.

Thus, the distinction between the 'Atma' and the 'Parmatma' is very obvious and clear. That consciousness which resides in the body of a creature (Jiva) is called Atma (Jiva-Atma), and it is this Atma that has created so many problems for its self by its association with the body. It is affected by its habitat, the body, much like anything wrapped in a coloured plastic bag would appear to have the colour of the material used for the bag. On the other hand, the Parmatma is the supreme Atma, the one who is not dependent on any body for support and residence, therefore not subject to either any of the taints associated with the body or to any limitations imposed by it. It is free as a sky borne bird, not bound like a caged bird.

Therefore it follows that if the Atma is able to overcome its limitations and flaws that it has allowed its self to be affected with by the virtue of its residence in and close association with the gross body of the creature, it would rise high in stature and become a Parmatma. Since the Atma is the truthful identity of a man, as soon as his Atma steps on the high citadel of holiness and divinity, the man also becomes God-like or Ishwar-like.]

8. It is this Parmatma (supreme Atma or cosmic universal Soul) that has revealed himself in myriad forms, such as Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer), Indra (the king of Gods), Yam (the God of death), Sun, Moon, and other such Gods. It is he who has revealed or manifested himself as demons, evil spirits and devils as well as a man, a woman and animals etc. Similarly, it is he who is known as Brahmins (i.e. as humans who are wise and learned ones) as well as those humans who are lowly and mean. Likewise, even the inanimate parts of creation (such as the immobile plants and other immovable things as mountains, earth etc. as well as the mobile ones such as water in the river, air in the form of breeze etc.) are all manifestations of Brahm (8).

9. This entire universe or cosmos is Brahm; there is nothing that is not Brahm (9).

10. The skin, blood, flesh, bones and the Atma/soul have no caste, creed, colour or race. These have been conceived as a practical measure to regulate and control our day to day behaviours and interactions with each other (10).

[Note—This is an important verse which clearly states that all are equal in the eyes of the scriptures. The different classes or castes or sects or creeds or races which the society has been divided and classified into are man made and artificial. It is just for the sake of convenience of the purpose of delineation of duties and to lay down procedure and guidelines for mutual interactions and determine one's specific place in the hierarchy of existence even as we have a system of hierarchical governance in place in modern society. For example, a Brahmin was supposed to be the teacher and guide for the rest of the society, and the Kshatriya was supposed to give protection to it, while its finances and material needs were looked after by the Vaishya, and it was manually served by the Shudra. This delegation of duties and responsibilities demanded that each person belonging to a particular class should adhere to the laws and regulations meant for that particular class to ensure uninterrupted carrying out of duties and prevention of friction and overlapping of functions causing unnecessary tension and duplicity. This segregation was therefore meant to make life regulated and easy, and not to say that one man was in anyway superior to another in terms of his essential being as a human and a living creature. This is because the Atma or soul, which is pure and conscious, is one in all the creatures, whether he is a man or a woman, a Brahmin or a Shudra. Further, other components of the body, such as the skin, blood etc., are obviously the same in all humans, and if taken in their fundamental and essential form they are the same in all living creatures, whether they are humans or animals. For example, blood when analysed in a chemical laboratory will show the same principal constituents whether it is taken from a Brahmin or from a Kshatriya; blood's constituents would remain the same for all segments of society. Similarly, skin and other parts of the body have no basic difference. The visible and other apparent differences that appear in different forms of life which are fundamentally the same is also supported by the Upanishads when they say that the Atma assumes different forms depending upon its past deeds and their accumulated effects, but the essential form of this Atma remains the same nevertheless. When we talk of 'life' we mean the entire living kingdom consisting of the plants and the animals, including the humans. This is the holistic view of the Upanishads.]

11-12. All deeds done by the organs of action of the body are termed as 'Karma'. When the creature thinks that 'I have done a particular deed', then it is defined as the deed done by the Atma because the Atma is the truthful identity of the creature, and the word 'I' applies to it. On the other hand, if the deed is done dispassionately without the involvement of the true self, then it does not have any effect upon the Atma because the latter remains neutral, aloof and uninvolved in what the body does. The sense of ego and pride accentuated by success and its incumbent fame and powers lead the creature to get involved in deeds notwithstanding the denigrating result of such involvement upon the Atma. All deeds done under the delusion of 'I am a doer' creates the desire for enjoying the good effects or fruits or rewards of doing these deeds. This is like a spiritual bondage for the Atma of the creature. Even religious and noble deeds—such as observance of sacraments, performance of fire sacrifices, giving of donations and making charities, doing severe Tapa (i.e. penances and austerities) etc.—done with this erroneous notion that 'I have done this deed and therefore I am entitled to enjoy its fruit or reward' make them not the proper way of doing deeds. Though they are noble and righteous in their own right, they nevertheless have a detrimental affect upon the purity of the Atma which is supposed to remain detached and disassociated from these deeds. Therefore, instead of providing liberation and deliverance, they tie the Atma down (11-12).

13. The same unchangeable, immutable, steady and uniform essence called the pure consciousness is present in everything that exists in this ever changing world, in everything that changes every now and then alongside the temporary and transient world. The seer as well as the object that is seen is both that same consciousness personified. This is the paradox of creation—that the things that are ever changing, that are in a state of constant flux, that are volatile, that never remain stable and uniform—should have the same unchanging entity as their core identity, as their fundamental essence and their principal spirit.

Though the same principal and essence resides uniformly in all the individual entities, these appear to have myriad forms and shapes forming the vast multifarious cosmos. These entities show diversities and endless combinations in their physical appearances, characters, behaviours and external features, in their natures, habits, temperaments, moral standards and intellectual development. For example, the same earth is used to make different shapes and sizes of mud pots by the potter, and the same earth becomes known by these newer names. Similarly, the same person may wear different attires and each new set of clothes gives him a distinct appearance and personality. This awareness or enlightenment is called Gyan, or truthful knowledge, wisdom and erudition. This realisation leading to the experience of the basic truth is achieved or obtained by exercising control over the body and its sense organs, by serving one's learned teacher, by having devotion for him, by believing in his words and paying attention to them, by contemplating upon and deeply thinking over the meaning of his preaching, by comprehending and diligently implementing them in practice, and by constantly keeping in mind the implications of his teachings by repeatedly reminding oneself about them (13).

14. Even as treating a lifeless and harmless length of rope as being a snake is the result of delusions and ignorance of the fact created by a hallucinating and ill-advised mind-intellect, to see 'duality' in this creation, or to distinguish between any two entities of this creation—despite the fact that the same supreme transcendental Brahm pervades uniformly and universally in the entire creation, be it in the form of the

various Gods, birds, animals and humans, the inanimate and the animate things, a male or a female, the classifications of society into the different Varnas and Ashrams¹, or in the concept of being free or being in a bondage etc.—is also due to ‘Agyan’, or ignorance and lack of truthful knowledge about the reality and fundamental truth. So, what appear on the surface is more often than not misleading, and not the correct and genuine thing. This is because the same Brahm lives in all the forms in which the world has manifested its self. So to distinguish between two things which have the same principle operating in them is fundamentally flawed, erroneous and fallacious; it is a misconception about the truth that has the opposite effect to that what is had by truthful knowledge

[This verse basically says that physical appearances are very deceptive. A man who takes things at face value, who decides the truth just by the external superficial things he sees, is making a grave error. For example, earth is moulded into various shapes and sizes by the potter—he crafts pots and toys from the same ingredient, the earth. An ordinary man would say that this is an earthen lamp, a mud pitcher, a clay doll, a toy horse, etc. while a wise man would say it is earth; it is clay in different forms.]

Similarly, a stupid man or a man who is deluded and does not know the truth would be scared stiff on seeing a length of rope in the dark, thinking it to be a snake. But even in the same darkness, another man who knows that it is simple, lifeless and harmless piece of ordinary rope will laugh at the panicked tantrums thrown by his stupid companion.

Therefore, in metaphysical terms, a wise and realised person is one who sees the same universal consciousness known as the Brahm in all that is visible around him. The innumerable contours and colours of the world would not at all change this basic truth for him. This Brahm has a gross body as the physical appearance of the world, and its fundamental essence that gives the world its worth, importance and significance, is the hidden Atma, the ‘pure self’ of each individual unit in this world. And incidentally, the wise man realises, that it is the same, immutable consciousness that resides in his own bosom as his Atma. This Atma is Brahm personified. This is called Gyan. Any other interpretation is categorised as Agyan.] (14).

[Note—¹*Varans* and *Ashrams* in society--(a) The four Varnas--The society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are—(i) Brahmins—the learned and teaching class; they also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (ii) Kshatriyas —they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (iii) Vaishyas —they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life, and (iv) the Shudras —the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

(b) The four Ashrams—The life of a man is divided into four segments or Ashrams—(a) Brahmacharya —this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life

style, (b) Grihastha —when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life and dealings with this deceptive world with all their accompanying horrifying problems, (c) Vaanprastha —this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas —this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation and begging for food, and single mindedly aiming for emancipation and salvation.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called ‘Ashramo-panishad’ belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.]

15. True ‘Sukh’, or genuine happiness, pleasure, comfort, welfare, joy, delight and true gratification, is the state of infinite blissfulness, contentedness and eternal peace that is obtained by acquisition of knowledge about the supreme Brahm who is a personification of truth, consciousness and bliss. This state is akin to realising the eternally blissful and conscious nature of the pure self which is known as the Atma (15).

[Note--This Atma is a true image of the supreme transcendental Brahm. This Atma is the consciousness that forms the ‘self’ of the creature. Once this realisation dawns upon the creature that he has a great lineage, a great heritage, a great ancestry, it fills him with a sense of greatness and majesty which not only removes his sense of dejection at being humbled by delusions of the world and at being besieged by worldly sorrows, pains, torments and anguish, but inspires him to aim for that high goal of truth-realisation and acquisition of spiritual knowledge in life so that he reaches the stature befitting his exalted ancestry. He would not do anything that stains his exalted stature. This awareness also makes him happy and joyful in the sense that he forgets his pains and takes them in his stride. He realises that he belongs to a noble class of creatures and his pure self never suffers or perishes like the body does, because it is eternally blissful and imperishable.]

16. ‘Dukh’, or the feeling or notion of suffering, sorrow, pain, grief and anguish is due to the mind being diverted towards the objects of this deluding and transient world which are essentially perishable and illusionary in nature. This mind then gets enamoured by their charms, however illusionary they might be (just like getting deluded by the sight of water in a hot desert when one sees a mirage). This causes the mind to make so many vows and determinations regarding those objects; it makes so many resolves and creates so many aspirations in connection with them. The mind, once charmed and fascinated by these objects, tries to acquire them at any cost, resulting in the setting-off of a chain of events which rob the mind of its peace and tranquility. The wise creature represented by his truthful identity called the Atma knows that this world is gross and illusionary, and that the objects that are part of this

world are equally gross and illusionary, but this same creature is overcome by delusions which ignite ignorance in him and he begins to yearn for those same perishable things which his intellect has been warning him to be aware of. This situation is called 'Dukh'; this development causes innumerable problems for the creature and throws him in a swirling whirlpool of miseries and sorrows, leading to constant sufferings and grief (16).

[Note—Two opposing notions have been described in verse nos. 15 and 16. While 'Sukha' gives happiness and peace to the creature, 'Dukha' is a metaphor for all miseries from which he suffers. We will observe that a man who is aware of his Atma's exalted stature and the falsehood of the body and the world remains calm, peaceful and infinitely contented. On the other hand, a man who has just the opposite idea about who he is, i.e. who treats his body as his 'self' instead of the Atma, remains perpetually submerged in an ocean of miseries and sorrows. This is because he will have uncountable ambitions, hopes and expectations from his body which lives in this world and interacts with it, and it's just impossible to fulfill them all. Besides this, the body gradually becomes old and infirm, it suffers from numerous limitations, and can never be at peace with its self. So many of his expectations and hopes in life fail; so many of his aspirations and ambitions in life remain a distant dream. Relations and trusts are made, broken and betrayed. There is pain, agony and grief all around. So there is no scope of ever finding everlasting peace.

The contrast is sharp and obvious in these two cases of a creature's existence.]

17. 'Swarga' or heaven is equivalent to an existence when one is fortunate enough to have contact and communion with the 'truth' which is possible only when one comes in contact with it. In other words, any situation where the 'truth and reality' exists, where it is discussed, where the life is totally submerged and soaked in it, where nothing except the truth prevails—that place or situation is akin to Swarga.

On the other hand, 'Narka' or hell is equivalent to having contact and dealings with that which is not the truth and reality. Therefore, to remain engrossed in the artificial and deluding objects of the perishable and deluding world which cause nothing but pain and sufferings, which create a trap for the Atma and bogs it down in the swamp of delusions and ignorance that in its wake lead the Atma to remain trapped in this tormenting world in an endless cycle of birth and death because of its deeds and their consequences, is called Narka (17).

18. 'Bandhan', or being tied in shackles, is the erroneous thought that the physical body is 'My Self', and it is 'Me'. This thought that 'I' is the body which enjoys the world and its objects of sensual gratifications, that 'I' is anything other than the Atma, are due to ignorance which has a horary origin. This misconception arising from eternal ignorance and inherent delusions that are present in the gross world/creation right from its beginning is the cause of all fetters that tie the creature to this world because it erroneously thinks that this 'I' is its body and not the Atma. As is well established that the word 'I' is synonymous with ego and self pride, called Ahankar, and that this trait is demoting and detrimental for the soul's elevation to a high pedestal, it is tantamount to putting a shackle upon the creature and tying it down to this world where the body lives. It blocks its spiritual progress and upliftment. This ignorance-induced shackle is called Bandhan (18).

19. The thought that these worldly relations such as the father, mother, brother and son, as well as the different assets or possessions such as the household, the field and the garden etc. belong to me is also another form of fetter that shackle the creature to

this world. In fact, any notion of attachment or belonging to or possession of any thing pertaining to this mortal and artificial world is tantamount to being tied in shackles (19).

20. Another form of Bandhan or shackle/fetter is the notion that one has done a particular deed, that the deed's successful accomplishment was because of efforts made by me, that I am the one who has done the deed, and therefore I am the one who is entitled to its rewards or fruits. By extension it involves the desire to do more things and to make efforts to finish off those deeds that are yet unfinished; it creates an endless 'chain' of wishes, aspirations, ambitions, desires and yearnings. This 'chain' is the fetter that ties the creature down. So, the notion of being a 'doer of deeds' and the 'pride and ego' attendant with its successful accomplishment, and the desire to enhance this accomplishment or to finish off the unfinished task are all symbolic fetters that shackle the creature to the world. [This is because this notion implies that the creature thinks that his body is his true identity, as it is the body that is doing the deed and not the Atma which is actually his truthful self vis-à-vis the body. This misconception in itself creates a mirage-like situation which traps the creature. And by saying 'traps the creature' it is implied that the 'Atma' is trapped because the latter is the truthful identity of the creature.] (20).

21. Another form of Bandhan or worldly shackle that ties the Atma down is having any desire or ambition to acquire the eight mystical powers called 'Siddhis', such as Anima¹ etc., which bestows a person with Aishwarya (i.e. that which gives him immense supernatural powers; that which bestows him with great worldly fame, opulence, majesty, supremacy and authority that comes with possession of great and mystical abilities and magical potentials; renown that comes with acquisition of divine faculties and powers associated with mysticism). [This is because these mystical and esoteric powers help the creature to acquire worldly fame and name, which in their wake give him wealth, follower-ship, majesty, powers and authority which he then uses to enhance his stature and material well being in this world. For a true renunciate and detached person who has realised the futility of worldly pursuits there is no power and authority more attractive than the one called the Atma or the supreme transcendental Brahm. Such a realised person would utilise his energy for achieving more noble goals than frittering it away in acquiring those potentials that can give him only worldly fame and authority. Further, a true renunciate and enlightened person would like to remain in a secluded and calm place in order to contemplate and meditate upon the truth, and would not like any disturbance whatsoever, while all these mystical and divine powers that bestow great authority, glory, grandeur, glamour and supremacy, collectively called Aishwarya, make him much sought after by people who would like him to help them overcome their personal worldly problems.]

Hence, even the resolve to acquire these eight so-called 'Siddhis' or mystical powers is a form of shackle for the creature that would tie him down to the mundane world (21).

[Note—¹The *eight Siddhis* are the following-- There are eight mystical powers or accomplishment called 'Siddhis'. They are the following— (i) 'Anima' 'अणिमा' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' 'महिमा' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' 'गरिमा' is to have

weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' 'लघिमा' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' 'प्राप्ति' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Prakramya' 'प्राक्रम्य' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' 'ईश्वत्त्व' is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' 'वशित्व' is to be able to control and subdue others.]

22. Worshipping, offering obeisance and praying to Gods as well as singing the laurels of and lavishing praises on humans, flattering them, pleading with them and appeasing them in order to fulfill one's worldly desires, and requesting their intercession for worldly gains and accomplishments in any endeavour, are also equivalent to being shackled or getting tied (because these undermine one's self respect and the dignity of the pure conscious 'self' which is the supreme Brahm personified as one's Atma; further these pleadings make one subservient to these Gods and humans, and makes one feel obliged to them and come under their obligations which robs the independence of the creature) (22).

23. Another form of Bandhan or getting tied or being shackled is to resolve to follow the eight-fold path of Yoga (consisting of Yam, Niyam, Asan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, Dhyana and Samadhi) (23).

[Note—The *eight-fold path of Yoga*-- According to Patanjali who is considered to be the greatest exponent of Yoga, the latter consists of the following eight-fold paths— (1) 'Yam' or self restraint; (2) 'Niyam' or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) 'Aasan' or postures for meditation; (4) 'Pranyam' or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) 'Pratyahar' or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) 'Dhaarna' or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; fixed attention; (7) 'Dhyana' or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; continuous meditation; and (8) 'Samadhi' or a state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation.]

24. Bandhan or being shackled and tied also takes the form of being too obsessed with observance of the rules and codes of conduct as prescribed for various Varnas (classes in society) and Ashrams (the phases into which the life of a Hindu was divided by ancient sages) (24).

[Note—The four *Varnas* and the four *Ashrams* have been described as a note to verse no. 14 above.]

25. To have fears, to endeavour to follow orders and be obedient, and to have doubts and confusions, traits that are integral to all the living creatures that have an Atma, are also one of the various forms of Bandhans or getting tied and shackled (25).

26. To be very diligent and too obsessed about doing various righteous and auspicious deeds as required by religious doctrines, such as Yagya (religious sacrifices and rituals), Vrat (observing fasting and other religious vows), Tapa (austerities and penances) and Daan (making charities and giving donations), as well as endeavouring to acquire Gyan (truthful knowledge as contained in the scriptures by studying them)—all these activities also lead the creature to be tied in fetters, or falling in a Bandhan (26).

[Note—It should be noted that this verse as well as previous verse no. 23 and 24 do not mean that one should not observe these rules, that one should not do Yoga or make charities or follow the tenets of Varans and Ashrams or do sacrifices. They are not intended to make a man reckless and wayward, and nullify what has been preached by the scriptures and ancient sages and seers by ridiculing them. Instead, they mean that since the main aim of all these observances is to realise the ultimate Truth which is Brahm through the medium of self-realisation of the Atma of the individual creature, because it is easier to do it as the Atma is residing in the creature's own bosom and it does not have to search it elsewhere, once this aim is achieved then it is useless and waste of time and energy in going over these steps over and over again once the spiritual citadel is achieved. It must be remembered that all these are stepping stones to higher spiritualism and true liberation from the shackles that tie the soul down, and therefore they are not meant to be insulted and demeaned in anyway whatsoever.]

27. In the same vein, even the desire to have Moksha, or liberation and deliverance, is also a form of Bandhan or shackle (because then a man becomes obsessed with doing such deeds and taking such actions which would pave the path for his obtaining Moksha, but each of these deeds and actions would create their own sequence of consequences that might adversely effect his overall spiritual liberation and deliverance, for no action can ever remain free from a counter reaction) (27).

28. Verily, having any kind of Sankalp (volition, ambition, aspiration, determination, vows etc.) is one or the other form of Bandhan or shackle that tie the creature (for the same reason as pointed out in verse no. 27 above) (28).

29. When a person is able to overcome and free himself from the charming but deluding allurements of all the material sense objects and things of this enticing world which is basically perishable, transient and temporary by nature—whether the object of his fascination is unstable, perishable and transient (such as the comforts provided by the company of a woman and possession of material wealth as well as a healthy body and happy household) or appears to be stable, long-lasting and enduring (such as good name and fame, various skills and knowledge, the auspicious long term effects of noble deeds and righteous actions)—he is deemed to have obtained the exalted state of existence called 'Moksha' when he is freed from the fetters created by this world and its traps.

Similarly, when a person is successful in understanding the nature of the illusionary charms proffered by this material world by pondering deeply into their essential nature and form, when he is able to eliminate his attachments and endearments with all of them—whether they provide him with Sukh (happiness and comforts, joys and pleasures) or Dukh (sorrows, sufferings, pains and miseries)—i.e. when he becomes totally disassociated with the world and becomes a genuine renunciate par-excellence, it is only then that he is deemed to have reached the exalted state of 'Moksha', or has achieved liberation and deliverance from all shackles that tie an ignorant and deluded man to this world of myriad entrapments (29).

30. Only a true and self-realised Guru¹ (moral preceptor; teacher and guide) who is able to advise the disciple, inspire him and guide him on how to access that supreme Brahm who resides in the body of all the creatures of this creation as their pure consciousness, is worthy of worshipping, honouring and admiring. [He is the only one

who is worthy of keeping company with and to sit with. See verse no. 17 in this context.] (30).

[Note—¹A *Guru*—the word ‘Guru’ has two parts—viz. ‘Gu’ meaning darkness, and ‘Ru’ meaning light. Hence the combined word indicates a person who can remove the darkness of ignorance of his follower by showing him the light of knowledge. He is the one who is expected to have risen above self vested interests and keeps the welfare of the disciple as his main objective. He is the one who has transcended the mundane and has acquired sublime awareness of the supreme Reality, because only those who are themselves aware of anything can hope to tell others about it. A true Guru is treated as being equivalent to the ‘Trinity Gods’—(1) Brahma, the creator, because he creates or helps to take birth good virtues and noble qualities in his disciple; (2) Vishnu, the sustainer, because he nourishes, sustains and helps to inculcate and develop wisdom and enlightenment in his disciple and leads him on the truthful path; and (3) Shiva, the concluder, because he helps to end, conclude and eliminate ignorance and negative traits in his disciple. He is ‘God like’ because he functions in all these capacities at the same time, besides being exalted in all knowledge, being virtuous, of high moral character and beyond reproach, being a source of unbound spiritual energy, being self realised and enlightened, and being eternal in the sense that what he advises to his disciple, the path he shows, the light that he lights in the dark heart of the creature, makes him immortal. Therefore, a Guru is honoured for the divine virtues that he represents and embodies, that he teaches and implements in his life, for the divinity, for the Lord and for the personification of the great teachings of the scriptures that he exemplifies. It is not his physical body that is of any value for veneration, for the soul and not the body is venerable.

There is a minor Upanishad called ‘Dwayo-panishad’ which describes the chief characteristics of a true Guru. It has only seven Mantras. This Upanishad is being cited here verse by verse to clearly highlight the main features of a Guru:---‘(a) Verse nos.1-2= A person is called a Guru if he is endowed with enlightenment and wisdom making him well versed and skilled in the Vedas, both in their literal knowledge as well as in the profound wisdom and the ethereal and eclectic metaphysical and spiritual philosophy they contain, who is an ardent devotee and sincere follower of Lord Vishnu, who is free from such negative traits as jealousy, envy and malice, who is well versed and skilled in the various holy and divine Mantras, their usage, their ethereal importance and spiritual significance as well as all other matters related with them, who is sincerely devoted to those Mantras and has firm belief, conviction and faith in them, who seeks the shelter and refuge of those Mantras, who is pure and immaculate, uncorrupt and unpolluted in any form, who is devoted and dedicated to his own Guru, and who is well versed and skilled not only in all the Purans but all other scriptures as well.

(b) Verse no.3= A person is called a Guru who has a comprehensive and holistic knowledge and understanding of all the scriptures, and who not only preaches righteousness, probity and propriety as well as nobility of thoughts and actions but also lives them and implements them in their letter and spirit in his personal life.

(c) Verse no. 4= The letter ‘Gu’ means darkness, while the letter ‘Ru’ means that which remove that darkness. Hence, Guru is one who removes the darkness representing ignorance and delusions that are so typically associated with this deluding world.

(d) Verse no.5= A true Guru is equivalent to the supreme and transcendental Brahman; he is the ultimate destination for a seeker; he is a fount of the supreme knowledge and the source of the best of such knowledge; he is deemed to be the best and the greatest asset for a man.

(e) Verse no.6= A Guru is the best thing a wise seeker seeks and searches for, he is the best and the supreme place for seeking refuge and shelter with, and he being a dispenser of the profoundest of wisdom and knowledge is deemed to be a person who

is the most important, who has the highest standards of greatness and magnificence, who is most dignified and meritorious, who is most weighty and significant, and who is most distinct and outstanding in all aspects.

(f) Verse no.7= Pronouncing the word 'Guru' even once enables the aspirant to access liberation and deliverance from this entrapping and deluding world. All his efforts are deemed to have been successful by simply saying this powerful word sincerely. Such a man does never come back (enters the cycle of birth and death) in this world again—verily, this is the truth. Those who understand this fact correctly get the desired fruit'.]

31. A true disciple is one in whose heart or bosom only the eclectic and sublime knowledge of the supreme transcendental Brahm remains after thorough investigation, examination and understanding of the actual nature of the mundane, artificial, temporary and mortal world. This has created a strong and sincere sense of renunciation in him accompanied by the kindling of enlightenment. Such a disciple has applied Gyan (rational mind and analytical thoughts laced with erudition and wisdom to arrive at the factual truth about what is real and what is imaginary) to determine the falsehood of the world and its objects, and this knowledge has inspired him to concentrate upon the factual thing represented by the truthful Brahm, which is consciousness and truth personified, and which resides in the heart of the disciple as his Atma. In other words, a true disciple is one who has no confusions about what is true and what is false; he would not be led astray by false charms created by the deluding effects of this artificial and entrapping world, and instead strive to constantly focus his attention on the truthful path of self-realisation (31).

32. A 'Vidwan', or an expert, a scholar, an erudite and sagacious person who is deemed to be a wise and learned one is he who knows the holistic truth and reality about the holy, sublime, ethereal and eclectic form of the essential element called Atma that resides in the heart of all the creatures. He is aware of its enlightened and supreme form and nature. He has that penetrating insight that enables him to see and realise that the same divine principle known as the Atma that resides in his own bosom also resides uniformly and universally in the heart of all the other creatures in this creation. This realisation in him is not based on hypothesis but on proper and logical understanding and personal experience, on research and analysis, on erudition and wisdom, on deep pondering and meditation, on scientific exploration and examination of all available proofs and data (32).

33. A 'Moodh', or a stupid and foolish person, a person of low intellect, is defined as one who is firmly grouted in ignorant views about the concept of deeds and pride. That is, a person who erroneously thinks that 'he' is the one who is doing certain deed, and that he is 'proud' of his deeds and their results, is deemed to be an ignorant fool. This is because he is unaware that 'his' true self is the Atma and not the body that is actually doing any deed, and to have pride for something not done is indeed foolish and a stupid proposition (33).

34. That Tapa (doing penances, observing austerities and undergoing sufferance) which is done with the desire to acquire the majesty, fame, glory, powers, potentials and authority that are possessed by Gods such as Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer), Ishan (Lord Shiva; the concluder), Indra (the king of Gods) and other such divine Gods, is called 'Asura Tapa', or the demonic, unrighteous, inauspicious and improper form of Tapa.

Similarly, that Tapa which is done with malefic intentions to harm others when one is severely angry and wrathful at them, that Tapa which is done with jealousy and hatred towards anyone, that Tapa which is done with the intention of causing violence and pain to others, that Tapa which is done with deceit and a sense of false pride and numerous other such negative thoughts and notions are all called non-righteous forms of Tapa or the demonic form of Tapa called 'Asura Tapa'.

Not only Tapa, but any other sacrament or religious ritual such as observance of Vrat (fasting and making and keeping of vows), Yagya (fire sacrifices and other religious ceremonies) that are done with these above enumerated faults are deemed to be unholy and unrighteous. They are all demonic (34).

[Note—This type of hard penance and austerity is called 'Asura' because it does not serve the purpose of any spiritual welfare of the aspirant. At the most it can bless him with the acquisition of the greatest of powers, authorities and majesties that are obtainable in this world, but they will only give him worldly name, fame, pomp and grandeur. They would act as a 'golden chain' that tie his Atma/soul to the world, but would not help to 'break' the chain. Success in such Tapa bring such worldly blessings in their wake that the creature is swept away by their accompanying charms and pomp, but in the process he is uprooted from his own foundation and tossed around like a piece of wood on the surface of the ocean. These Tapas serve only a deluded Atma's vested interest, but never the genuine interest of an enlightened Atma.]

35. Real and truthful form of Tapa (austerity, penance and sufferance which is considered holy, auspicious and righteous) is that in which a person acquires sufficient clarity of thought, level of wisdom and deep insight that enlightens him to realise the fact that Brahm is the ultimate, genuine, immutable and irrefutable Truth, while the rest of the world is false and illusionary. With the aid of this eclectic erudition and robust wisdom, he burns his desires to acquire such 'Aishwarya' that would empower him with stupendous powers and potentials which are equivalent to those possessed by Brahma the creator and the rest of the Gods. [In other words, he is filled with the light of enlightenment that makes him disillusioned with the false charms of the world and the false praises and honours that comes to those who possess supernatural powers, because these powers and potentials can give him worldly fame and authority but they would never help him attain true liberation and deliverance; they would never help him with his quest for emancipation and salvation. On the other hand, yearning for obtaining Aishwarya would tie his soul to an endless cycle of wants and more wants, because with each successful worldly accomplishment the person would endeavour to acquire the next better one as he would have tasted the sweetness of success as well as the worldly benefits that accrue with acquisition of wealth, majesty, authority, supremacy and opulence that are natural to such accomplishments.]

In fact, true and auspicious Tapa is dedicated to realisation of the true self, and is marked by great humility, renunciation and enlightenment with their accompanying liberation from the fetters of all kinds that shackle a creature to anything that has the remotest link with this world of wants and desires, even if these relate to acquiring divine and mystical powers called Aishwarya. [Say, what power is more powerful and majestic and authoritative than Brahm! So, why should one fritter away precious time and energy to pursue lesser goals when he has the opportunity to pursue higher goals? Therefore, true Tapa is when the desire to acquire God-like authority and powers that would give worldly fame and majesty are totally annihilated. Instead, true Tapa is one which kindles self-realisation which helps the man to burn everything that is false and

deluding and denigrating for his Atma/soul, and which paves the way for his spiritual liberation and deliverance. This Tapa is like the fire which burns the rope that has bound the man to a vast array of delusions and falsehoods.] (35).

36. The supreme transcendental residence or abode of Brahm is called 'Param Pad'. It is the most exalted, the highest and the best stature that a creature can expect to achieve in his spiritual quest for excellence and immortality. This abode of Brahm is beyond the realm where Pran (the life giving vital wind called breath along with the other vital winds), Indris (the organs of the gross body), Anthakaran (the subtle body; the mind and intellect and heart) etc. have their existence. That abode is inhabited by the eternally blissful, eternally conscious and eternally liberated entity known as the supreme Brahm (36).

[Note—According to the philosophy of Vedanta, there are three types of bodies of a creature—the gross body consisting of the various sense organs of actions and perceptions, the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect, and the causal body in which the Atma resides surrounded by the bliss sheath. This Atma is a micro level embodiment of Brahm; the latter resides in the individual creature as its Atma. So, realisation of Brahm is equivalent to realising the true nature and form of the 'self'. This realisation is the culmination of all spiritual endeavours, including the Tapa mentioned in verse no. 35. It is like reaching the citadel where the great Truth lies; it is the stature that is most exalted and revered.]

37. That which is beyond the physical limitations of geography, time, circumstance and physical forces of nature, that which is an embodiment of pure consciousness, that which is the essence and truth is the only thing that is eligible for and worthy of being accepted and welcomed. [That entity is indeed the supreme Brahm; the rest is all impertinent and false, perishable and irrelevant.] (37).

38. That which is not the truth is not an image of the truthful form of the 'self' which is pure consciousness, enlightened, eternal, imperishable and blissful, that which is created by Maya (delusions, ignorance and imaginations) is not worthy of accepting or welcoming. Any thought of this world by the mind and intellect, the world which is reached or accessed by the organs of the body, is definitely not acceptable (because it has its genesis in falsehood as it is the creation of the mind; it is perishable; it is entrapping with all its delusions and illusionary charms just like the mirage of a desert; it is sought by the organs of the body which is itself gross and perishable; it is painful and tormenting in the sense that it traps the creature in an endless oscillating cycle of sorrows and joys; it never gives it rest and peace).

[That is, a wise creature should abhor such a world marked by falsehoods created by Maya; the creature should not think and pursue that which is not the truth like its own self which is 'truth personified' in the sense that the 'self' is pure consciousness and the 'soul', or the essence and spirit of the very existence of creation. In other words, a wise man is one who would not accept the deceptive charms and attractions of the world as true, and therefore would not be tempted to get hooked to them. He would know that it is like pursuing a desert mirage in search of water. He can never find true happiness, peace and rest in this material world created by Maya. These virtues are to be found when one turns inwards, becomes contemplative and introspective.] (38).

39. [The characteristics of a true Sanyasi, or a renunciate hermit, are being described in this verse.] Those who forsake all sense of 'Ahankar' (pride and ego; arrogance and haughtiness) and 'Mamta' (endearments, affections, attachments, greed and obsession) with all types of 'Dharmas' (doing righteous duties and assigned tasks that a person is supposed to do according to the class of society to which he belongs, called his Varna, or to the particular phase of life through which he is passing, called his Ashram)¹ and instead seek the shelter of their chosen deity, which in this case is none other than Brahm, those who are firmly convinced about and firmly believe in the truthfulness of the great sayings of the scriptures—such as, inter alia, 'You are that', 'I am Brahm', 'All that is here is certainly Brahm', 'There is nothing besides Brahm' etc.—which lead to their being firmly established in the conviction that 'I am Brahm', (which implies that the person has realised that he is not an ordinary creature but an image of the Supreme Being himself).

Such self-realised and enlightened persons are the ones who achieve the blissful state obtained during the perpetual state of Samadhi which is a trance-like state of consciousness where the creature lives in the material world but remains totally oblivious of it, and instead remains submerged in the bliss of realisation of his true self which is pure conscious and bliss personified. This state of perpetual blissfulness is called 'Nirvikalp Samadhi', literally meaning the state of meditative trance which has no parallel, and where all doubts and confusions about the 'truth' and the 'self' are completely obliterated. This Samadhi gives the aspirant eternal peace and happiness as compared to ordinary Samadhi which lasts for a limited period.

Verily, such a man is called a 'Yati' or an ascetic par-excellence; he is called a Sanyasi or a renunciate hermit. It is only such a person who is deemed to be liberated and delivered, is considered worthy of worship, adoration, admiration, honour, respect and reverence, is called a Yogi (one who practices meditation and contemplation), is called a Param Hans (a senior Sanyasi who is like a swan which chooses the best and leaves what is not the best; considered the wisest bird), is called an Avadhut (the best form of Sanyasi who has totally forsaken all formalities associated with the world and even those that are considered religious duties such as observance of sacraments, doing penances and austerities, keeping fasts, taking ritualistic bath, offering regular prayers etc.), and is a true Brahmin (a learned and wise person; a respected and honourable person; an elderly one who is sought by others for his knowledge, wisdom and his ability to provide moral and spiritual guidance) (39).

[Note—¹When a man does some noble deed and performs his religious duties diligently, called his *Dharma*, he inculcates some sort of hidden pride or pleasure in being a noble man who does good and auspicious deeds according to prescribed ways, and lives an exemplary life by the rule book. This in turn creates in him a hidden desire to keep on going with his good deeds so as to enhance their potentials and quality etc. It indirectly involves certain degree of fear of a bad name and punishment if he fails to do these auspicious deeds expected of him. Further, these good deeds are bound to produce good effects which would naturally create a sense of endearment and affection for them in the heart of the man; he would naturally be attracted by and towards them. Therefore he would be mentally shackled to those deeds which he would prefer to call his 'Dharma', and keep his body engaged in doing them. The success and fame and powers and authority that 'Dharma' brings in its wake fills a man with pride and ego; it makes him arrogant and haughty. That is, he is overcome with 'Ahankar'. He thinks that he is better than other people as he is pursuing 'Dharma'. The taste of success makes him yearn for greater 'Dharma', and this creates a sense of more desires, wants, yearnings, endearments, obsessions and

attachments to those things that bring glory to him. That is, he is overcome with 'Mamta'. Since this Upanishad emphasises that any type of Ahankar or Mamta are undesirable and unacceptable for a spiritual aspirant seeking communion with Brahm, even the Dharma proves detrimental to his liberation and deliverance as is very clear in earlier verses also. It is stressed here that true form of renunciation is forsaking all forms of formalities, including Dharma.]

40. Any seeker or spiritual aspirant who diligently studies this Upanishad called Niralambo-panishad with due attention, deep concentration and proper understanding, then by the grace and blessings of his Guru (moral preceptor and guide) he becomes equivalent in stature to the son of the Fire God and the Wind God (i.e. he becomes as radiant, as glorious, as majestic, as important and as powerful and potent as if he was the son of the Fire God or the Wind God). Being the attained one, being the realised one, being the enlightened one who has risen above the mundane and who has conquered ignorance, he does not have to take birth again in this mortal world (i.e. he is freed from the cycle of transmigration). This is the magnificently beautiful truth expounded by this Upanishad. Amen! (40).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—9

TRISHIKI BRAHMIN UPANISHAD

This is one of the prime Upanishads dealing with Yoga. It is in the form of a discourse by the Sun God in response to the question put forward to him by a sage named Trishiki Brahmin, and it is from him that this Upanishad has derived its name.

The questions the sage asks about the origin of things are mentioned in canto 1, verse no.1, and the rest of the canto describes the genesis of creation in response to those questions. The first quarter of canto 2 deals with various metaphysical concepts related to genesis of, while the major part deals with Yoga. This Upanishad defines, inter alia, Pran, Brahm, the various elements, the various stages in the development of the cosmos, its cause, the various states of existence, the different branches of Yoga, the different meditation exercises and sitting postures, the controlling of the vital winds and cleansing of the Naadis (the veins and nerves in the body), the benefits of Yoga, the process of doing Pranayam (a breath control exercise), the concept of Yam, Niyam, Dharna, Pratyahar etc.

In short, this Upanishad enumerates the process of self purification in a comprehensive manner. Other Upanishads which are very similar in nature and content are Jabal-darshan and Yogchudamani Upanishads amongst others.

Shanti Paath

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix 1 of this anthology.

Canto--1

1. Once upon a time, a Brahmin named Trishiki went to the divine abode of Lord Aditya (the Sun God) and asked, 'Oh Lord! What is this body? What is Pran? What is the cause of all this (that exists)? What is the Atma?'

2. He (Aditya) replied, 'Oh Brahmin! Whatever there is is an image of Shiva. Be convinced of it and know of it as such that the Lord who is eternal, universal and imperishable, is pristine pure and uncorrupt, is holy, divine, faultless and the one who is beyond reproach, who is omnipresent, all-pervading, almighty, majestic and magnanimous, is non-dual and an embodiment of beatitude and felicity—that supreme Lord is a 'witness to all' that exists. But the paradox is that he himself has assumed myriad forms just like a red hot piece of iron takes any form but remains 'iron' nevertheless. If it is asked which entity is to be truly seen or observed in all that is visible or 'lighted' in the form of this multifarious creation, then the irrefutable and emphatic answer would be 'Truth' which is a synonym for the almighty Brahm because it dispels or eliminates all ignorance and delusions which is at the base of this creation'. [That is, if one were to find out the truth in this world having myriad forms and astounding degree of diversity, one would conclude that it is Brahm. The reason for the enquiry is the doubt created by the diversity of the creation, because real 'truth' cannot be more than one, it cannot be many and multifarious. Therefore, we also conclude that since the visible world is so diverse that it makes a man dizzy, it has to be non-truth, simply because 'truth' can't be more than one. But the existence of the world cannot be denied outright as it is tangible, visible and witnessed first hand. So, the single essential element of Truth in this variable and diverse world is what is known as Brahm. This Brahm is non-dual and immutable like the universal element known as 'Truth'. The external variable features of the world are simply delusions created around this 'truth' by Maya.] [2].

3. [This verse describes the sequence in which the creation came into being.] Brahm created the 'Avayakta' (literally that which is not visible or manifestly evident and cannot be described, but does exist without doubt in a subtle and imperceptible form; here referring to Hiranyagarbha, the subtle body of the cosmos).

From Avayakta was produced 'Mahat' (literally meaning large, huge, vast, majestic and glorious; here referring to the Viraat Purush). Mahat produced 'Ahankar' (meaning the characteristics of pride, ego and a sense of false grandeur and majesty leading to arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy). Ahankar created the five 'Tanmatras' (referring to the senses of perceptions, such as touch, sound, sight, taste and smell). The next that came into being, from this Tanmatra, were the five gross elements called 'Mahabhuts' (which are the elements air, space, fire, water and earth). This entire universe has been created by these five elements, in different permutations and combinations, as its building blocks (much like atoms in a molecule, and molecules in any gross material thing in this world) [3].

[Note—The sequence thus becomes:-- (1) Brahm, (2) Avayakta, (3) Mahat, (4) Ahankar, (5) the five Tanmatras, (6) the five Mahabhuts, and (7) the universe as we know it.]

4. What is this world? It is a creation which results from the various faults associated with the five 'Bhuts' (which are earth, water, fire, air and space). How is the same egg-like rounded mass of cosmic jelly, called Pinda (which is the primordial cosmic embryo) divided into various divisions due to the faults associated with the five

elements? All the five elements have their origin from the same source, and therefore are expected to be identical. But they aren't. This is because of the varying level of subtlety that they have and the different functions they would perform. These five basic, primary elements of creation combined in varying ratios and proportions, in different permutations and combinations, to give (produce) an infinite variety of products (things) in this creation. This is the reason why the visible world is so multifaceted and varied. Each of its unit possesses a specific and unique character, quality, virtue, potential etc. depending upon a particular configuration in which these primary elements had combined or mixed together to create that particular thing, and this configuration is not repeated again, thereby bestowing a unique character to that particular thing.

Besides this, each unit of creation was assigned different name, exhibited different features, assumed different functions and roles depending upon the place, circumstance, time and context in which they existed. As a result, there came into being uncountable numbers and forms of Gods as well as the creatures and other things in this world [4].

[Note—It is easy to understand this phenomenon. Just like a given set of five primary colours can be mixed together in umpteen numbers of combinations to create an astounding array of colours of various hues and shades that are so varied in their external appearances as to be completely unique in themselves and have no apparent relation to the original ingredients, these five elements of creation (sky, air, fire, water and earth) combine with each other in equally innumerable permutations and combinations, in uncountable ratios and quantities, to give rise to things (units of creation) of varying subtlety and grossness and of such stupendous variations that no two units resembled one another, no two units were identical, and each one of them had its unique character and identity. The possibilities in which these five primary elements could be mixed or combined were infinite, and therefore the possibilities of type of creatures and material things formed by this mixing or combination were also infinite. And so came into being this fascinatingly magnificent, stupendously multifarious and astoundingly varied creation.]

5. The 'sky' or space (Akash)¹ element has five subtle divisions or forms—Antakaran (the discriminatory intellect; discriminatory powers; wisdom; morality), Mana (the mind and heart, the thoughts and emotions), Buddhi (the intellect; intelligence), Chitta (the memory; recollection powers; discriminatory intellect; the ability to concentrate and pay attention), and Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness). [Like the sky element, these qualities formed were the subtlest ones in creation. Again, like the sky element, they couldn't be seen independently but only in the context of other elements. For example, the same Mana and Buddhi appear to be different in different creatures. No two individuals will have the same level of wisdom and intelligence. It will depend on a variety of other factors just like the sky showing different colours depending upon numerous factors such as moisture, dust particles and other impurities, presence of clouds, angle of sunlight etc.]

The 'wind' or air (Vayu) element has five subtle divisions or forms---Samaan (that wind which controls circulation in the body), Udaan (that helps in upliftment of the soul; it helps the body to get up from a reclining position; it moves up inside the body), Vyan (that which pervades throughout the body maintaining equilibrium), Apaana (that wind which is inhaled and passes down the body; helps in ingestion, digestion and excretion of food), and Pran (the vital wind that is regarded as the spark of life inside the otherwise dead and inane gross body; exhaled breath). [The same wind/air element serves different functions in the body.]

The 'fire' (Agni) element takes the following subtle forms---the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. [These are the organs of perception in the body and are obviously gross in form, but the fire element resides in a subtle form in them. This stanza means that the fire element resides in these five external organs of the body to keep them active and energised. That is why they feel 'warm' to touch. When a man dies, the fire element leaves the body, and consequentially these organs feel 'cold' to touch.]

The 'water' (Apaha) produced the following five Tanmatras, or senses, such as hearing (pertaining to the ears), touch (pertaining to skin), sight (pertaining to eyes), taste (pertaining to tongue), and smell (pertaining to nose). [This stanza indicates the flow of blood in all the organs of the body, because it is the blood flowing in the veins and capillaries along with the sensations flowing in the nerves present in the body that these organs are able to carry on the functions of perceptions specific to them. Blood is a fluid and it is one of the forms in which the water element lives in the body to keep it alive and active.]

The 'earth' (Prithivi) element produced the following---voice (or mouth), hands, legs, anus and genitals. [These are the organs of action. The earth element is the grossest of the five elements in symbolic terms of level of erudition, wisdom and intellectual development, and the ability to think and discriminate. This is because it is the heaviest element and marked by a propensity to sink and settle at the lower level instead of rising high and up like the air or fire elements. It has a tendency to pull down instead of giving a lift upwards. That is why these organs where the earth is a dominant element can't think for themselves, and are regarded as the grossest in the hierarchy of organs in the body. They are under the command and control of the mind-intellect as well as the five organs of perceptions. They depend upon their higher brethrens to functions.] [5].

[Note--¹According to the philosophy of Vedanta, the *Akash* or space element referred above is the various spaces that encircle and envelop the entity that gives the sky or space its nomenclature. According to Vedanta, there are five types of subtle skies or spaces called 'Panchakash'. These five subtle skies encircle the following — (i) food 'sheath' (अन्नमय कोश), (ii) vital air sheath (प्राणमय कोश), (iii) mental sheath (मनोमय कोश), (iv) intellectual sheath (विज्ञानमय कोश), (v) and bliss sheath (आनन्दमय कोश). Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing.

That is, these three forms of the skies, the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

This verse outlines how the different parts of the body were formed from the primary elements in their descending order of subtlety, and ascending order of grossness.]

6. Gyan (truthful and incisive knowledge of reality), Sankalp (resolve, volition, determination, vows, aspirations), Nischaya (firmness of resolve and determination; certainty, surety, lack of doubt and ambiguity), Anusandhan (research and analysis;

deep insight into anything), and Abhimaan (ego, pride, vanity, haughtiness, arrogance and hypocrisy)---these activities of a creature are ‘done’ (instigated, inspired, provoked) by the sky or space element, and they are the objects of the ‘Antahakaran’. [That is, they are the objects on which the discriminatory intellect applies its wisdom and powers of discrimination. It is the subtle body of the creature consisting of the mind and intellect as well as the heart that inspires and propels it to make various determinations and have different aspirations based on its experience and information. The creature’s intellect directs it towards any action when it is reasonably certain that it would be successful in its endeavours. First it makes a resolve, then it researches about it, is certain of its ability to successfully accomplish it based upon the knowledge gathered, and this fills it with pride of its capabilities and potentials. Since the ‘sky’ element controls his intellect, wisdom, mind, heart and the sense of pride as described in verse no. 5, it is deemed to have sway over the above virtues and characteristics of a creature.]

Samikaran (to strike a balance or maintain equilibrium in the body), Unnayan (to lift up, elevate, levitate, enhance), Grahan (to accept, hold, imbibe, grasp, catch, acknowledge), Srawan (to hear; the vibrations produced by sound in the ear), and Shwas (breath; inhalation and exhalation)---these are the activities done or controlled by the ‘wind’ element. They are the objects of the vital wind called Pran. [As described above in verse no. 5, all these functions of the body are controlled by the various vital winds present inside the body of the creature. The Pran is considered the principle wind in as much as all other winds have any relevance only till the time the creature is alive; they lose their importance and relevance when the Pran makes its exit from the body and the creature dies. This fact has been emphasised in a number of Upanishads, such as Chandogya, Brihad-Aranyaka amongst others.]

The various senses of perceptions of the body, such as to hear the spoken words or the sense of hearing, to feel anything or the sense of touch, to see anything or the sense of sight, to determine the taste of anything or the sense of taste, and to smell anything or the sense of smell—all these are the activities of the ‘fire’ element (because it is the fire element in the form of life-giving warmth, energy, stamina, vigour and vitality inherent in this element that enables the organs of perception to function and to put to effect these perceptions, as is obvious when we consider the case of a dead body which does not perceive anything). These perceptions or senses come under the jurisdiction of the organs of perception (such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose respectively). All these senses of perception depend upon the ‘water’ element. [This is because the water element keeps the body well nourished and healthy to felicitate the proper functioning of these organs of perceptions. Water is present in many forms in the body, such as blood, lymph, mucous, enzymes, hormones etc., or all parts of the body that are not solids or dry like the bones and the skin. Therefore, the role that water plays in the body can never be underestimated.]

And finally, to speak, to give, to move, to excrete or eliminate the waste, and procreation or sexual gratification are the activities of the ‘earth’ element. These are the activities falling within the domain of the organs of action (such as the mouth, hand, leg, anus and genitals respectively).

The subjects pertaining to the organs of perception and organs of action are basically the same as those of the five ‘Tanmatras’ (the sense of various perceptions) and the five ‘Prans’ (vital wind forces) respectively. [The subjects pertaining to the organs of perceptions and the perceptions themselves are obviously the same. For instance, the eye has the perception of sight, and both have the same target—any object that has a physical shape, a form, a colour which can be ‘seen’. The ears and

the perception of hearing also likewise have the target—any sound that can be heard. This applies to the other organs as well. Similarly, the five organs of action and the five vital winds are inter-related. These five organs function normally as long as the five winds perform normally. Should any of the winds fail to carry out its functions in a proper way, the corresponding organ would malfunction. For instance, if the Apaana wind dithers, the anus malfunctions. If the Pran fails, the speech becomes incoherent and the man stutters/stammers. If the Udaana wind loses its strength, the legs won't lift the body. And so on and so forth.]

Similarly, memory, intelligence and thought (Chitta) as well as ego and pride (Ahankar) are inherent and an integral part of the intellect and mind (Buddhi and Mana) respectively. [The intellect is wise, erudite and enlightened, and therefore it does not have any sense of ego and pride, while the mind is under the influence of the information that it receives from the various sense organs of perception and responses of the organs of action, and therefore it feels proud of its capabilities and astounding potentials. Refer also to Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, Section 3-7.] [6].

[Note—There should be no confusion about what is being said in this verse. Basically it says that all the different functions of the body—from the subtlest such as functioning of the intellect, right up to the grossest such as the elimination of waste matter through the excretory organs—are manifestations of the inherent virtues to perform specific functions that are present in the five primary elements that came into existence. At the same time as controlling the functioning of the different units of the body, these elements themselves formed the body. So, since the body is a composite form of these five elements, the functions carried out by the different organs along with the unique characters, temperaments and inherent nature exhibited by the creature would indicate the proportion of the element that plays a dominant role in this creature's personal profile or personality as well as the functioning of each unit of its body. This is the reason why we have such a complex zoological kingdom where any one given class of animal has no resemblance with the other. Thus, by analyzing the characteristic features and behaviour of any given creature or even the functioning of any given unit of its body, we can deduce which of the five elements is dominant there.]

7. Avakash (literally meaning vacant space, where there is no activity; retirement), Vidhut (to move, to shake, to remove), Darshan (to see, to visualise, to have a glimpse, to perceive), Pindikaran (to combine everything into a homogenous rounded mass or ball or a spherical object to remove distinctions between different things), and Dharna (to bear, to have firm faith, conviction and belief)---these are the subtle forms that are the subjects of the five Tanmatras in their subtlest form (such as the sky, wind, fire, water and earth elements)¹ [7].

[Note---¹ To understand the import of this verse, we must take into account verse no. 5 and 6 above. The *five Tanmatras* are the five senses of perception (hear, smell, taste, touch and see), and they all depend on the various organs of perception (ear, nose, tongue, skin and eye respectively) which are the gross manifestations of the five basic elements of creation (sky, wind, water, earth and fire respectively). The ears hear sound from the vast space surrounding the creature; the wind element enables one to move around; the fire element lights up the realm and enables the creature to see, while, at the same, time keeping the world warm, a factor most essential for life to thrive; the water element helps in dissolving everything uniformly without distinction, mixing all the ingredients into a homogenous mass or dough out of which a ball can be made, which in turn symbolises the primordial egg from which the whole cosmos evolved in due course; and the earth element which bears

the burden of the entire creation and acts as its ground or base or foundation.]

8. Therefore, there are said to be twelve organs¹ through which the entire physical world has been revealed. The creation has been classified into three categories—Adhyatmic (the causal world pertaining to the Atma or spirit), Adhibhautic (the gross world visible around us on the earth), and Adhidaivic (the subtle world of the Gods).

There are twelve Gods such as the Moon, Brahma (the creator), Lokpals (the custodians of the different directions of the world), Vayu (the Wind God), the Sun, Varun (the Water God), Ashwini-kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God and regarded in mythology as the Gods' physician), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods; the controller of life giving rains), Upendra (Lord Vishnu, the sustainer), Prajapati (the care takers of the subjects of creation created by Brahma and responsible for carrying the process of creation forward), and Yam (the Death God and who judges the creature after death).

They are the patron Gods of the twelve organs and they have their subtle abode in the twelve principal Naadis (nerves or veins or ducts or channels) of the body associated with these organs. These twelve Gods are also called the subtle parts of Pran or the vital wind which is synonymous with life or the Atma or pure consciousness of the creature². A person who is acquainted with the twelve organs, their gross and subtle forms as well as their patron Gods, is indeed considered to be learned, sagacious, wise and scholarly [8].

[Note---(1)¹The *twelve organs* referred to in the above verse are the following:-- the 6 organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue, skin) + 6 organs of action (mouth, hand, leg, anus, genital) + heart + mind = 12.

(2)² The *Gods* are the personifications of the various forces of Nature that govern life. Since the Atma is an embodiment of life as well as a synonym of life, these so-called Gods are an intrinsic and integral part of the Atma. They cannot be separated from the Atma even as the latter also cannot be separated from the former. Pran and the Atma are also synonyms; both coexist in the body of the creature, and its life depends equally upon both. Whereas the Atma is pure consciousness, the Pran is the vital wind, but the term consciousness is synonymous with life as much as the word Pran. Hence, these twelve Gods represent the Atma performing different functions in their forms; the Atma exercises control over the entire creation in its manifestation as these twelve Gods. The Atma is a composite of these Gods.]

9. [Now the sage describes how the five basic elements of creation called the 'Panch Bhuts' (the sky, air, fire, water, earth) are used in practice to create a perception of the world.]

The space is filled with air or wind. The latter has five forms—Samaan, Vyan, Udaan, Apaana and Pran. The Samaan wind helps in the perception of the spoken word in the form of sound heard through the ears. This sound or word is established in the space of the sky. All that is to be known or learnt by the intellect is done by means of hearing about it, and the organ that does it is the ear. The ear hears or picks up every bit of sound that it comes in contact with. It treats all sounds equally, and does not shut-off one in preference to the other. If the ears are closed, all sounds are eliminated. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the ears are the playing field or the field of activity of the Samaan wind. Since sound travels in open space, the importance of sky element is obvious if the ears have to hear anything. This Samaan

wind coordinates the ears and the intellect because the latter would base its decisions on what it hears with the aid of the ears.

The Vyan wind is discerned as the sense of touch and is felt through the medium of the skin. It is established in the air around the body in the space filled with the wind element. The hands are especially empowered to feel this wind (i.e. the hands can 'feel' a thing better than any other part of the body—such as it being soft or hard, the feel of the texture of the object, and feel whether it is hot or cold etc.). The Mana (mind) gets the 'feel' or 'hang' of the world around it by 'feeling' it or 'touching' it with the hand. To get a better idea of anything, we tend to lift it and turn it over in our hands. The Mana derives greater degree of satisfactions when it holds and feels a thing than merely hearing about it or seeing it. The sense of touch and feel as perceived by the skin of the hand is a notch better than that perceived from any other part of the body. The Vyan wind coordinates the working of the Mana and the perception of touch as exhibited by the hand and skin. This is because this wind is uniformly distributed all over the area where the body is covered by the skin.

The Udaan wind helps the eyes to see things that have a definite shape, size, contours and colour. This wind enables the legs to move and is established in the fire element (i.e. the energy required to move the body is predominantly located in the legs). When the eye sees something attractive, it inspires the legs to take the body there, and the legs move only when the Udaan wind wants. So, this wind coordinates the working of the eyes and the legs.

The Apaan wind helps the tongue to perceive the sense of taste, and it is present in the lower organs of the body (i.e. the alimentary canal) in the form of the water element. The water element predominates those places where this wind has a major role to play (as is evident from the fact that the tongue is always moist and it needs saliva to taste anything; the digestive juices present in the intestines are in liquid form; the semen is a fluid as is the urine, the latter two being the produce of the genitals and the excretory organs which ironically have a common exit; the stool in the rectum is also semi-solid, indicating the presence of water). If the Apaan wind and the water element do not work in a coordinated fashion, the intake of food, its digestion and excretion would be badly affected. Besides it, if the body does not get proper nourishment, its memory and ability to focus on the job at hand, to study and contemplate etc. take a beating. The attention is diverted and a man gets restless if the flatus gets incarcerated in the intestines; the man feels bloated and hypochondriac. In other words, the functioning of the 'Chitta', i.e. the ability of the mind to stay attentive and fix its self on the job at hand, the perception of taste which enables one to enjoy the food eaten and therefore in better secretion of digestive juices, the movement of food in the intestines and its excretion, as also the production of semen (genital fluids), its movement and its proper implantation in the female organs—all depend upon and are coordinated by the Apaan wind.

Finally, the Pran wind reveals itself in the nose (as breath) and helps it to exhibit the ability to smell. Its other habitat is the anus where the earth element is present in the form of faecal matter (stool). The Pran is synonymous with life as also is food, because life cannot be sustained without either the Pran or the food. Food is produced from earth. Therefore, food and earth are to be treated equally as the fifth element. A wise and erudite person is one who knows this. The nose is able to smell two genres of smells—one that is pleasant such as the aroma of delicious food or the sweet fragrance of flowers, and the other that is foul such as the stinking wind coming out of the anus. The ability to smell is controlled by the Pran wind (breath present in the nose), while at the same time this Pran is a metaphor for the life-sustaining basic

ingredients and nourishment present in any food item. Food is grown on earth. The gross part of food from which all nutrients have been extracted by the body accumulates in the rectum. Hence, this food, as excreta, is called 'night soil' or 'night earth', where the word 'night' would stand for something from which life has been removed or extracted, something that is gross in nature. Since such excreta (which is food minus Pran) accumulates in the anus and rectum, the latter are said to be dominated by the earth element simply because food has its natural habitat in the earth. Pran is the wind that coordinates the functioning of life in this creation through the medium of the food, and it lives on earth in the form of all life forms that exist.] [9].

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Canto---2

1. In the above context, there is a Shloka (a verse) propounding the doctrine that says all the elements –such as the Antakaran (the subtle sky), wind, fire, taste (the water element) and anus (the earth element)-- have sixteen 'Kalaas' or fractions or subtle parts each. The first half of any given one element and the different fractions of other elements in varying proportions are clumped together to form the various gross organs of the creature [1].

[Note—Each primary Bhut or element is divided into sixteen parts or fractions. These elements form the organs of the body. Therefore, one half of each organ would be deemed to consist of half part of the principal element, i.e. eight parts of the principal element, and the other half is made up of different fractions taken from the remaining four elements as outlined below in verse no. 2.]

2. Each gross organ has one half of it made up of the principal subtle element that dominates that particular organ, and the remaining half consists of one fourth fraction of the second half of each of all the remaining subtle elements [2].

[Note--- For example, verse no. 9 of canto 1 tells us that the anus has the earth element in predominance. It means that the anus, which is the organ of excretion, has one half part made of the earth element while the other half consists of one fourth part of the second half of the other remaining four elements—viz. space, air, water and fire. That is, if we analyse the constituent ingredients of the anus which is deemed to be divided into 16 parts, we will find that half of it, i.e. 8 parts, consist of the earth element, while the other half of 8 parts consists of $\frac{1}{4}$ th of one half part of each of the remaining four elements. That means, the second half of the anus consists of 2 fractions ($\frac{1}{4}$ of 8 = 2) each of the sky, air, fire and water elements. Thus the configuration of the anus would in effect be as follows—8 parts earth + 2 parts sky + 2 parts air + 2 parts fire + 2 parts water = 16 parts.]

3. The fraction or part of the subtle elements revealed in the form of the gross organs of the upper half of the body of the creature should be treated as subtler as compared to the lower half which is grosser in nature. This way, all that exists consists of both the subtle and the gross aspects of creation mixed together in varying degrees of subtlety and grossness. There is no clear-cut demarcation or dividing line. The transition from one element to another is imperceptible and smooth [3].

[Note—Its easy to imagine this scenario. If we mix two or more liquids of different colours and density in a jar, stir the mixture vigorously and let the jar stand, the heavier or grosser liquid will settle at the bottom while the lightest liquid will rise up to the top. The liquid with medium density will occupy the central part. Transition

from one colour to another will be also smooth and gradual, until the time the whole mixture acquires a new identity of its own which is very different from the original ingredients that were mixed. There will be no clear-cut and sharp dividing line to separate one liquid from the other, and the slightest movement or jerk of the jar would disturb the equilibrium between the different liquids and mix them all up. If we extend this example to the earth, we will understand why the earth consists of so many layers or strata. The only difference is that the earth is solid and its strata are fixed as compared to the liquids in the jar.]

4. Hence all the 'Bhuts' (elements) depend upon each other for their existence. Even the grossest element earth consists of the other more subtle elements as described in verse no. 2 and 3 above. Though the earth appears to be primarily gross and inanimate, it nevertheless has a subtle aspect, a conscious principle that is inherently and intrinsically present in it. That is, 'consciousness' is as integral part of earth as it is of the animate creatures that inhabit the earth, move over it, reproduce over it and sustained by it [4].

[Note—The fire element is an integral part of earth, and so is the water, air and sky. Fire is synonymous with life, and so are the other elements. It is a well established fact that earth is the foundation upon which the whole of the edifice of the visible creation rests and finds sustenance. The earth can actually foster life, and it is only possible if it has this potential 'consciousness' in the form of all the five elements. Only that which is 'living and inherently conscious' can sustain and foster intelligent life. Not only fire but all other elements such as water, air and sky need earth to have their existence made meaningful.]

5. It is because the earth has subtle consciousness (as described above that it is not fully gross and dead and inane, and neither is it inert and inactive), it produces or creates or exhibits the myriad, multidimensional signs of life, such as creation or production of herbs, food, all the four forms of life¹, the juices (or the nourishing and refreshing fluids that create and sustain life), blood, flesh, bones, stomach, sperms and the like [5].

[Note---¹All the four forms of life on the earth have their origin in a *panda*, which is an embryo shaped roughly like a rounded ball, and hence the name 'pinda' meaning a rounded mass of any matter. That is why the earth is 'round' like a ball or Pinda. It is an embryo that harbours life in all its vibrant forms. The four forms of life based on this earth and dependent on it are the following:-- (a) Swadej or those born from sweat, such as lice, bacteria etc. (b) Andaj or those born from an egg, such as birds, (c) Udjbhij or those born from seeds, such as plants, and (d) Jarayuj or those born from an embryo inside the womb of the mother, such as animals and humans.]

6. The union or clubbing together of these basic elements in different ratios and proportions results in the possibility of creation of so many 'cells' which are harbingers of different forms of life that the basic elements assume. The 'Anna-maye Pinda' (the food sheath or that cell or microcosmic body which is based on the food element) is present in the region of the navel¹ [6].

[Note--¹That is the reason why an embryo developing in a mother's womb draws its nourishment through a duct called placenta attached to the navel of the foetus. This placenta is the food pipe of the developing creature.]

7. In the centre of this 'Anna-Pinda' is the heart which is shaped like a lotus flower having a stem. In the core of this heart is present that 'conscious Lord' (the Atma or soul or pure consciousness) in whom the element of Ahankar (pride) that he is a 'Karta' (doer of deeds) is to be found. That is, the conscious factor present at the core of a creature's existence is defined as the Lord of the creature because that consciousness called 'Chetna' is the only conscious and enlightened authority and the highest seat of power that controls and drives the rest of the setup. This authority is the true identity of the creature and is also known as the Atma. Though basically wise, this Atma or the virtual Lord of the creature erroneously thinks, under the influence of delusions and ignorance, that it does the various deeds and takes actions through the medium of the body. This conception or idea that it is the one that exclusively does everything, that it does this or that, or that it is the only entity capable, competent and authorised to do this and that, fills it with false pride and ego. It thinks 'I am a doer'. This is Ahankar. It makes it arrogant and haughty [7].

[Note---It would be noted here that this happens when ignorance and delusions, called Maya, cast a dark shadow upon the creature. By the word 'creature', the true identity is referred to. The situation can be compared to a man who sees the world through a tainted glass; his vision of the world would be influenced by the colour of the glass. It would not matter if he is learned or a stupid; he would not be able to even realise that he is being taken for a ride when he decides that the world has such and such colour (character). So when the Atma is under the influence of ignorance, it loses sight of the Truth and Reality.]

8. The seed for this Ahankar, or the root cause from which ego, pride, vanity and arrogance sprouts or generates, lies in 'Moha' (ignorance, delusions, false attachments). It is a negative trait symbolising a sphere of darkness induced by ignorance, and is very gross by nature. The throat is its special habitat though it is present everywhere in the world, clumped to other elements that constitute it [8].

[Note—A man's arrogant and haughty nature becomes evident when he speaks arrogantly and haughtily. That is why it is said that a foolish and ignorant man reveals himself when he speaks, and not if he keeps quiet, because his speech generated in his throat highlights the level of his stupidity.]

9. The most exalted citadel which is said to be the supreme habitat of the blissful Atma is in the head (i.e. in the intellect and mind). It is very powerful and it is that which throws light to illuminate the world. [That is, it is the mind which makes the Atma aware of the world. [9].

[Note—The Atma is usually depicted as having its abode in the lotus-like heart. The head is, on the other hand, said to be the abode of Brahm. These two sites have great symbolic importance. While the Atma may be sentimental or emotional as it lives in the heart which is characterised by these virtues, the Brahm is never so; it is always wise and rational as is indicated by its abode in the head (brain) where the intellect and mind also have their seat. Brahm and Atma are however synonymous with each other; they are the two sides of the same coin. What Brahm is at the macrocosmic level, the Atma is at the micro level. So, while Atma is blissful, the supreme Atma is more so, it is more blissful in its form as Brahm. This observation means that if the heart relies upon the guidance of the mind-intellect, the creature would find peace and true happiness.]

10. The 'Jagrat', or the waking state of consciousness, dominates the worldly life of a creature and is found everywhere around it. The 'Swapna', or the dream state, has a subtle presence in the former. [This is because (a) what is visible in this world while a creature is awake is actually like a mirage in a desert; it is false, illusionary and deluding; it is like a dream in the true sense, and (b) stimuli received by the brain while a creature is awake acts like a data bank for the memory, or the sub-conscious, upon which a creature's dreams are based.]

The other two states—deep sleep and Turiya—have nothing to do with this gross world because in these two states of existence, the mind-intellect cease to function and interfere with the pure consciousness [10].

11. In all the habitats (i.e. in all the places and all the bodies of all the creatures), this Atma, which is like Shiva (literally one that is pure, holy, auspicious, wise, enlightened, truthful and eternal), is uniformly and universally present in the world as the all-pervading, omnipresent and omniscient Being even as juice is uniformly and equally distributed inside a fruit [11].

[Note—In other words, the pure consciousness is equally present in the humblest of creature such as an insect as it is present in the mighty elephant. It is universally present in all living entities in creation, without any exception. This is like the uniform distribution of sap or juice in any given ripe fruit; it cannot be said that one part of it has a greater density of juice than the other part.]

12. The 'Anna-maye Kosh' (the food sheath) encloses the other four sheaths of a creature. The consciousness assumes a form which concurs with the relevant sheath. This concurrence makes the supreme and uncorrupt Atma appear to be like that particular sheath [12].

[Note---(1) Briefly, the 'food sheath' is the outermost layer. It encloses the following four sheaths---(a) vital air sheath, (b) mental sheath, (c) intellect sheath, and (d) bliss sheath. The Atma is located at the core of the bliss sheath. (2) The Atma, which is the 'true self' of the creature and its real identity, interacts with the external world as long as the creature lives in it. In this process, the Atma has to go through these sheaths because they intervene between the Atma and the world. Each sheath or veil or covering reflects its character and casts its shadow upon the Atma, thereby making the latter appear tinged or tainted with those characteristics which are typical for that particular sheath/covering/veil. Its like looking through a coloured glass; the sight is bound to be affected by the glass's colour.]

13. The only difference between a 'Jiva' (a living mortal creature) and 'Shiva' (the eternal, immortal Supreme Being personifying the ultimate Truth) is that the former has various faults while the latter is faultless. The various 'Koshas' (sheaths, coverings or veils) are the progenitors or all the faults associated with a creature and all its states of existence [13].

14. Even as the churning of milk produces foam or froth on its surface, the numerous agitations that churn the mind create so many distractions, diversions, perplexities and confusions for it [14].

15. 'Actions and deeds' create a sense of being a 'doer' and the notion of 'doing', while elimination of actions and deeds gives peace and tranquility to the creature. When the mind moves downwards in its thinking level (i.e. when it becomes lowly,

mean, corrupted and selfish in its outlooks), it resembles the sun moving south of the equator (i.e. the summer solstice). That is, when the mind gets bogged down by agitations and buffeted by confusions and perplexities created by delusions and ignorance, it loses its calm and poise even as the south bound sun causes temperatures to rise and cause uneasiness and discomfort in the world [15].

16. When the eternal Shiva (the supreme and truthful Lord) is covered by the basic fault of 'Ahankar' (pride, ego, vanity, arrogance and the sense of superiority), he gets degraded or demoted to become a 'Jiva' (a worldly creature). Here, as a creature, he becomes shrouded or veiled by a cloud of delusions and ignorance which collectively form his 'Prakriti' (i.e. his inherent temperaments, tendencies and natural habits) which drive all his actions and deeds. The combined effect of ignorance and the basic nature that he assumes as a creature make him forget about his exalted original form, and instead encase him in a shell of 'Moha' (attachments, endearments, infatuations and longings for the world and its innumerable attractions). That is, he is covered and overcome by the net of delusions and attachments which are the hallmarks of this entrapping world of magnificent charms, material comforts and sensual pleasures [16].

[Note---If the supreme Lord can come to this state because of pride and ego, just imagine what can happen to an ordinary creature who is prone to all sorts of faults. The Upanishadic teachings should be understood in a broad perspective. This verse emphasises the importance of humility and the ill effects of pride. The hard to crack 'Moha' overcomes a creature only if he allows Ahankar ridden-and-driven Prakriti to get the better of him. Refer also to Subalo-panishad (Chapter 6), Canto 9, verse no. 13 for more detail.]

17. Becoming a slave of his 'Vasanas' (literally the various passions and desires pertaining to this world and its material objects, and deriving self gratification from them), he has to enter thousands of wombs and lies there sleeping in utter ignorance. He is like a fish which tosses about between the two banks of a river without finding rest anywhere [17].

18. In due course of time when circumstances turn in his favour, he gets wisdom and realises his true nature (or he becomes enlightened about his pure conscious Atma as his true identity). With this enlightenment, he symbolically heads 'North' which is a metaphoric way of saying 'upliftment of the soul'. This is an endeavour towards self realisation and emancipation. As a result, instead of perpetually tossing about in the world as a mortal creature in different births, he migrates to a higher state which will enable and empower him to break free from this endless cycle of birth and death [18].

19. After that (i.e. when self awareness dawns upon him), he establishes his 'Pran' (the vital wind force of life) in the head region and gets engrossed in doing Yoga (contemplation and meditation). Yoga helps in attaining Gyan (enlightenment), while the latter inspires and propels the aspirant towards the former. Both are complimentary to each other [19].

20. An aspirant Yogi (ascetic; spiritual aspirant) who remains committed, sincere and diligent in his search of the truthful knowledge is never degraded or demoted from his higher and exalted stature. He is deemed to have (posses) that deep and penetrating insight that enables one to see the supreme, transcendental 'Shiva' in the midst of all

the faults associated with the world, but such a person does not see any fault with that Supreme Being himself [20].

[Note—Here the supreme Brahm is called *Shiva* because the word defines all the characteristic features of Brahm—such as the virtues of truthfulness, eternity, auspiciousness, blessedness, wisdom, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, purity, beauty etc. A true Yogi would have acquired sufficient degree of enlightenment and the ability to see behind the external façade to find out the secret truth. He can peep behind the veil or shroud that has covered the genuine truth, and unravel its secrets. He realises that the supreme Brahm, who is called Shiva because he has divine eclectic virtues as noted here, is not what he appears to be when seen with the ordinary eyes of the body in his Maya-ridden manifestation of this creation. What is externally visible is a completely distorted and tainted view or idea of Brahm. Actually, none of the faults or shortcomings associated with this deluding and artificial world have anything to do with the ‘real’ Brahm; what one usually knows or witnesses is a ‘conditioned’ Brahm—a Brahm conditioned by such factors as Ahankar, Prakriti and Maya. Obviously, this is not the ‘true, genuine’ form of Brahm, for the latter is absolutely immaculate, pristine pure and untainted. Besides this, Brahm is Truth personified, and is attributeless. Say, how can Truth be more than one, how can it be so varied and multifarious as this visible world apparently is, and how can it have so many attributes when it is supposed to be attributeless?]

21. An excellent Yogi is one who contemplates and meditates upon the supreme Brahm which has no faults, with utmost devotion and commitment. A person who does not have this wisdom cannot be successful in his spiritual practices [21].

22. The mind should be controlled and harnessed by exercising restraint over the vital wind called ‘Pran’ with the aid of persistent Yoga (meditation) exercises. An ascetic should endeavour to cut through the fetters of ignorance with the help of firm resolve and a sharp intellect which should be potent and sharp as the edge of a knife [22].

23. The flame of truthful knowledge and genuine enlightenment is lit with the aid of diligently pursuing the principles of Yoga having eight branches. Yoga, which is a spiritual endeavour, has two main paths—Gyan Yoga and Karma Yoga, meaning the path of knowledge and the path of deeds and actions respectively [23].

[Note---The Yogchudamani and Jabal-darshan Upanishads of the Sam Veda tradition, amongst others, deal with Yoga in detail. The concept of Yoga and its wider implications are a subject matter of a number of Upanishads. Refer also to Niralambo-panishad (Chapter 8), verse no. 23 for the 8-fold path of Yoga, and Mantriko-panishad (Chapter 7), note to verse no. 1 for the philosophy of Deeds.]

24. Oh exalted Brahmin! Now I shall describe ‘Kriya Yoga’ or ‘Karma Yoga’ (the philosophy dealing with doing deeds as a means of spiritual fulfillment) to you. A Yogi whose mind-intellect complex is free from agitations never falls and gets trapped in the net cast by false, transient and misleading material comforts and gratifications provided by the sensual objects of the world [24].

25—28. Oh exalted Brahmin! This dual Yoga (Gyan and Karma) can be understood as follows. The ‘righteous path of doing deeds’ is to keep the mind engaged in doing them as and when they come along, and as required or demanded by given circumstances, but should be auspicious as well as deemed fit and proper as per the righteous requirements of one’s duty and obligations, subject to the proper

sanction/permission of the scriptures. The 'path of acquiring truthful knowledge and enlightenment' is to keep the mind focused on spiritual enhancement and moral upliftment inspite of distractions and numerous hurdles that come along. This enables an aspirant to attain success in acquiring spiritual powers.

These two paths help the Yogi to break free from all the fetters that shackle his mind to this world [25-26].

With such an enlightened view of Yoga, the wise aspirant is able to attain the supreme Shiva who makes him completely fulfilled. A person, who follows these two paths of Yoga with a pure mind and sincere commitment, is able to achieve success in getting emancipation and deliverance from the horrors of the world.

Further, to have total dispassion towards this perishable body and its organs is called 'Yam', or self-restraint, by the wise ones [27-28].

29. 'Niyam', literally meaning regular and diligent practice of spiritual tenets with devotion and consistency, is to have constant, consistent and persistent devotion and endearment towards the essential and ultimate Truth which is supreme and transcendental, irrefutable and unequivocal (and which is known as 'Brahm').

The best 'Asan', or sitting posture, is to have total and sincere dispassion towards, be detached from and remain indifferent to all the objects of this material world [29].

[Note—The word 'Asan' means to 'come and sit comfortably'. One can sit with ease only when his mind and body are rested and peaceful. One cannot sit still if there is physical discomfort or the mind remains fidgety due to a variety of reasons. He would, for example, glance surreptitiously here and there, prick his nose, scratch his body, shift positions, or even fall asleep. This is not true Asan. So, to sit in Asan implies that total self control is practiced, and this is possible when both the mind and the body become oblivious of the surrounding world and its disturbing impulses.]

30. 'Pranayam', literally meaning to exercise control over breath and other vital winds of the body, is to be perpetually aware of the illusionary and false nature of this world. 'Pratyahar', literally referring to the control of the mind, is to divert mind-intellect away from the external world, and instead focus it in contemplation, to turn it inwards and direct its efforts in the search of the Atma, to inspire it towards contemplation and meditation on the absolute Truth in this creation, to be quiet, tranquil both externally and internally, and to abandon extrovert tendencies of the mind. (See also verse no.130 for elaboration on Pratyahar) [30].

31. 'Dharna', literally meaning to have a firm belief, conviction and faith, is to have an unwavering, stable and steadfast mind and intellect. 'Dhyan', is to contemplate, meditate, focus the attention on something, and to ponder constantly upon the fact that 'I am an image of that pure consciousness'. (See also verse no. 134 in this context) [31].

32-35. 'Samadhi', literally to be in a perpetual trance like state of bliss and be oblivious of the external world, is to completely forget about everything, even that one has forgotten anything at all.

Non-violence, truthfulness, non stealing, celibacy, continence or abstinence from sexual indulgences and other pervert activities of the body and mind, mercy and compassion, simplicity and humility (32), forgiveness, patience and fortitude, restrained eating, and purity of mind, intellect and body---these are regarded as the ten supreme 'Yams'. 'Tapa', meaning austerity, penance, sufferance and hardships

endured for some noble cause, 'Santosh', meaning contentedness and satiety, to have belief on the doctrines and teachings of the scriptures, to make charities and donations, the remembrance of the supreme Lord known as 'Hari' and devotedly serving him and contemplating upon him¹ (33), hearing Vedanta (the preaching of Upanishads), to have modesty, honour, dignity, self respect and shame, to have wisdom and intelligence, to repeat the holy Mantras or divine, ethereal words of the Lord, and to keep stern religious vows and observe fasting----these are ten 'Niyams'.

Oh Brahmin! Now the various sitting postures called 'Asans', such as 'Swastik' and others are being described (34).

The sitting posture called 'Swastik Asan' is one in which a person sits cheerfully in an erect position, with the sole of one foot lying against the center of the thigh of the opposite leg¹ (35) [32-35].

[Note--(1) ¹Refer also to verse no.134 in this context.

(2) ²Verse nos.28-32 define the eight branches of Yoga, while verse nos. 33-34 enumerate the ten Yams and Niyams. See also Jabal-darshan Upanishad, canto 2 of Sam Veda tradition in this context.]

36. To sit steady and erect so that the legs are bent inwards at the knees and the left ankle bones are placed to the right side of the spine while the right ankle bones are to the left side, is called 'Gomukh Asan' because this is how a cow sits. [The body is held erect. The left hand is taken to the back and it hooks itself to the right hand which has been brought to the back by lifting it and crossing it over the right shoulder. The fingers of both the hands are bent inwards towards the palms, and then they hook each other behind the middle of the spine.] [36].

37. To sit steady and erect with the legs bent inwards from the knee so that the lower part of a leg (i.e. the calf or the shank) is tucked or pressed under the thigh of the same leg, and the buttocks rest on the heels of the upturned feet resting flat on the ground with their soles pointing upwards from the rear of the buttocks---this sitting posture is known as 'Virasan', or the way a warrior should sit.

[There is a variation of this posture in which both the legs are not folded in; only the right leg is closed in, while the left leg is bent at approximate 90⁰ at the knee and its sole lies flat on the ground. The body is thus supported by one leg fully bent at the knee and one leg at 90⁰ at the knee.] [37].

38. To sit steady and erect so that the heel of the right leg is placed to the left side of the anus (under the buttocks) and the heel of the left leg is placed to the right side of the anus, is called 'Yogasan'. This is what those who are expert in Yoga (meditation) say [38].

39. To sit cross-legged so that the upper part of the foot (i.e. the opposite side of the sole) along with the toes of one leg is placed on the thigh of the opposite leg (i.e. left toes on the right thigh, and right toes on the left thigh), is called Padmasan (literally to sit in a lotus posture). [The soles would be pointing outwards while resting on the thighs and the body would be held erect---i.e. the spine, neck and head would be in a straight line. The hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of and below the navel. The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the base of the Adam's apple at the pit of the throat. This sitting posture is said to dispel/ameliorate all diseases, and counter or antidote all poisons. That is, this sitting posture is very beneficial for the body.] [39].

40. A 'Baddha Padmasan' (literally, a closed or tied form of Padmasan) is when, after sitting in a normal or common form of Padmasan posture (as described in verse no. 39), the big toe of the left foot is held by the right hand, and that of the right foot is held by the left hand. [In this posture, the hands are taken behind the back, and the clasping of the toe of the opposite side is done from behind. To felicitate this posture, the spine will have to be curved backwards a bit. The hands and legs are virtually 'bound or tied' to each other. That is why it is called 'Baddha' or tied or closed form of Padmasan.] [40].

41. A 'Kukutta Asan' (literally, to sit like a cock) is when, after sitting in a normal Padmasan posture (as described in verse no. 39), both the hands are passed under the legs through the gap between the calf and the thigh of the respective side, the palms are spread out on the ground and the body is lifted up (levitated) on the straightened hands with the open palms and its fingers acting as pedestals on which the body appears to be mounted [41].

42. A 'Kurmasan' (literally to sit like a tortoise) is the next higher Asan after the Kukutta Asan. In this case, the two shoulders are virtually tied or clasped by the hands (whereas in Kukutta Asan the hands were thrust through closed or folded legs). [To do this Kurma Asan, the legs are stretched out but slightly bent at the knee, the hands are passed from under the leg of the respective side and then bent upwards from elbow joint to be taken towards the shoulder of the same side. The neck is bent forward towards the ground sufficiently enough to enable the two hands to clasp each other from behind the nape of the neck. In this position, the back would be bent forward to be almost parallel to the ground, the legs outstretched, chin almost touching the ground in front, and the hands clasped behind the neck. Seen from the front, this posture resembles a tortoise, and hence the name.] [42].

43. A 'Dhanush Asan' (literally, a posture resembling a stringed bow) is when the big toes of the feet are clasped by the hands, the body stretched and bent forwards while the legs are slightly curved upwards. This makes the body appear like a stringed bow [43].

[Note—There is another version of this 'bow-like' Asan. According to it, instead of bending forward and clasping the toes while sitting on the ground, one lies down flat on the ground and the body is curved (arched) backwards in a bow like shape so that the front of the abdomen appears to be in a parabolic or concave bowl shape. The legs are lifted up and bent towards the head from behind the back, while almost simultaneously the head and upper part of the body are also lifted up and the hands are taken over and behind the shoulders to clasp the toe of the leg of the same side. This clasping would obviously be at the back of the body. When viewed from the side, the body would appear to be like a stringed bow, and hence the name 'Dhanush Asan'.]

44. A 'Singhasan or Singh Asan' (literally, to sit like a lion) is to sit in a posture so that the 'siwani', or the fold of skin between the anus and the genitals, called the suture, is pressed by the ankle bones of the opposite side, and the body is lowered on the legs which are bent or folded in from the knees, while the hands are stretched out and the open palms are placed on the bent knee of the same side so that the fingers stretch out like a palm-fan with the open palm resting on the bent knee joint. [Usually in this posture, the mouth is wide open and the tongue protrudes out, while the eyes glare at some point in the distance or at the tip of the nose. This is how a lion sits, and

hence the name. This posture makes the body resemble a sitting lion. This is a posture adored by ascetics (Yogis) and it is dedicated to the memory of Lord Narsingh, the half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu to liberate his great child devotee Prahalad from the torments inflicted upon him by his own demon father. Amongst the benefits of this Asan is that it clears the voice and removes foul breath.] [44].

45. A 'Bhadrasan or Bhadra Asan' (literally, to sit like a gentleman) is to sit in an erect posture by placing the two ankle joints under the buttocks on either side of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus such that they (the two ankle joints) touch each other, and then using the hands to firmly clasp the soles of the feet of the respective side from the rear side of the buttock (i.e. left foot by the left hand, and the right foot by the right hand). [This posture can neutralise the ill effects of all diseases which cause the production of toxins in the body, or which are caused in the body by taking external poisons or other kinds of toxins; it helps to get rid of diseases as well.] [45].

46. A 'Muktasan or Mukta Asan' (literally, the posture that gives liberation and deliverance) is when the ankle bones of one side of the body are placed under the buttock of the opposite side of the suture joint. The foot is either held at right angles to the ground with its sole pointing outward and the toe pointing inwards, such that the body is held erect on the toes of the legs which would now act as pedestals to support the weight of the body.

There is a variation of this Asan. In this, the foot is not held at right angles to the ground but upturned and placed flat on it under the buttocks so that the sole points upwards from behind the buttocks, and the body rests on the legs bent tightly inwards and tucked under the buttocks. In this sitting position, the heels would be pressing against the buttocks from below on either side of the suture. [Refer verse no. 37.] [46].

47-52. A 'Mayurasan or Mayur Asan' (literally, to sit like a peacock) entails putting the palms flat on the ground, pressing the elbows against the abdomen on either side of the navel, and then balancing the body in a horizontal plane with the hands and open palms resting flat on the ground to act as pedestals (47). In this posture, the head and the legs are turned upwards and away from the ground. This posture resembles the outline features of a peacock. [This 'Mayurasan' has the potential to destroy all sins.]

A 'Matsyaasan or Matsya Asan' (literally, to sit like a fish) is done (by lying on the back on the ground and) bending the right leg at the knee joint and resting the foot on the left leg at the point where the thigh joins the abdomen (i.e. at the pelvic girdle). Then the big toe of this right leg is grasped by the hands. (For this, the body will have to be curved slightly backwards along the spine so that the hands can reach the toe). [The left leg is similarly bent and its foot placed on the right thigh at its upper end. The toe of the left leg is also grasped by the hand to ensure that both the legs and their foot are symmetrically and properly placed. The hands are then taken behind the head, bent at the elbow joints, and then the two elbows are clasped by the fingers of the opposite hand. Thus, the hands would form a square or rectangular enclosure around the head. The previously curved body is allowed to lower itself and lie flat on the ground. This posture resembles a fish, and therefore the name Matsya Asan (48 ½).

A 'Siddhasan or Siddha Asan' (literally, a posture that bestows mystical powers, or a posture that only accomplished experts can do) is when the ankle of the left foot is tucked under the suture (which is a fold of skin between the anus and the testicles) and the right foot is placed on the top of the genitals. The body is kept erect in this posture. To sit in this posture, the two legs are first stretched out. The left leg is then bent at the knee and folded in so that the heel touches the genitals and the sole lies flat against the inner thighs of the right leg. Then the right leg is folded in and the heel is placed in front of the pubic bone right above the testicles, and the sole touches the inner thigh of the previously folded left leg. The two hands are stretched out and the outer side of the wrist of each hand is placed on the bent knee joint of the respective side. The palm is opened and the thumb is touched by the bent first finger to form a virtual ring, with the remaining three fingers held out straight. The practitioner sits perfectly in a ram-rod straight position, with the spine, the neck and the head in a straight line. The mental sight is fixed on a spot in front of the nose, and this state of intense concentration is maintained as long as is feasible for the practitioner. Then the legs are gradually unfolded, and after some period of relaxation the process is repeated with the opposite leg being folded in first and placed below the other leg. [It is believed that this posture is one of the best postures to be adopted for Yoga amongst the eighty four lakh (84×10^5) postures of meditation. The fact that there are as many numbers of Asans as there are species of living beings is endorsed by Dyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 42 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. This Siddha Asan is capable of cleansing all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts in the body), and is so-called because it is possible to access the divine source of cosmic energy trapped inside the body as well as experience the cosmic power of the kindled Spirit by employing this Asan. The word 'Siddha' implies one who has acquired stupendous mystical and supernatural powers that are beyond the parameters of the physical and mundane world.] (49 ½).

A 'Paschimotan Asan' (literally that posture that marks the setting of the sun in the western horizon) is when the legs are stretched out straight on the ground, the big toes are clasped by the hands, and the head is placed on the two knees that touch each other. Obviously, the body would have to bend forward at the waist (50 ½).

A 'Sukhasan or Sukha Asan' (literally that posture which gives comfort and is easy for the aspirant to do) is one which is comfortable for an aspirant. If it is not possible to adopt other postures (as described in previous verse nos. 35-50 ½) for any reason whatsoever, then one should sit in whatever posture or position that is comfortable and convenient for him. A person who has obtained expertise in these various sitting postures or Asans is deemed to have won control over the three legendary worlds (i.e. the subterranean, the terrestrial and the celestial worlds which correspond to the nether world, the mortal world, and the heavenly world) in a symbolic manner (52). [47-52].

[Note—Verse nos. 35-52 describe the various Asans which are sixteen in number. One should also refer to Jabal-darshan Upanishad, canto 3 of the Sam Veda tradition in this connection.]

53. One should diligently follow the tenets of 'Yam and Niyam', and practice the various 'Asans' to be able to exercise proper control over the self. When he is able to exercise control over his body, he should then endeavour to cleanse or de-clog the different 'Naadis' or the tubular ducts/channels inside the body. [The Naadis are the various nerves and veins, or the ducts and channels of the body, that carry energy, vitality and stimuli as well as blood and nutrition to various parts of the body.] To do

this, he should practice 'Pranayam', literally the controlling of the breath and other vital wind forces circulating in the body. [For Pranayam, see verse nos. 92-95 below.] [53].

54. The length of a man's body measures approx. ninety-six fingers put one on the top of the other. [That is, the height of an average man is roughly the width of ninety-six fingers.] It is said that 'Pran'(the vital wind that supports life) has a measurement which is twelve fingers more than the measurement of the body (i.e. the Pran is $96+12 = 108$ fingers in dimension) [54].

[Note—Refer Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 2.]

55. The various winds present in the body should be heated, mixed and made light by the aid of the heating done by the 'fire element' inherently present in the body. This heating and mixing is done with the help of Yoga exercises. [As a result, the vital winds mix with each other and become homogenous. As a matter of fact, the word Yoga means to bring about a union between two things; to join two or more things and establish a harmony between them.] This would empower one to be able to acquire awareness of the supreme Brahm [55].

[Note---Briefly according to Yoga discipline, when the breath is held by the process of *Pranayam*, the vital winds of the body get heated. As warm air is lighter, it has a tendency to rise up in the body. Further, the process also envisions that a coiled subtle energy center in the body called the *Kundalini* is also aroused by Pranayam. This Kundalini has trapped cosmic energy, and once the vital winds are heated, they activate this center and release the energy. The latter then snakes up the spine to reach the top of the head where the subtle but sublime and supreme Brahm is said to reside. The heated air moves around and swirls in the top of the head, and consequentially bristles and stimulates the different areas of the brain and massage the nerves, giving rise to a sense of bliss and peace which are feelings associated with Brahm realisation.]

56-58. In a human body, at the center of it, there is said to be a triangular spot which is the place of the 'fire element' in the body. It glows like hot, molten gold. In 4-legged animals (56), this subtle fire-place in the body has four corners (i.e. it is square in shape). In the birds, it is rounded in shape. In serpents and other reptiles, it has six corners (i.e. it is hexagonal). And in those creatures born from sweat or moisture (e.g. lice, bacteria), it is 8-cornered (i.e. it is octagonal).

All these subtle but powerful 'fire places' glow and are radiant like an actually blazing fire (57).

In a human body, that fire place has a body called the 'Kand' (a root like structure resembling a carrot or a radish). It is nine fingers width in length. The upper brightest part of the Kand is like a lighted lamp which is four fingers width in diameter and four fingers width in height [58].

59-61. In reptiles, birds and 4-legged animals, this Kand is rounded in shape. The top central part of this Kand is circular in shape and is called 'Nabhi' (literally the navel) (59).

Here there is a serrated wheel having twelve teeth on its outer edge (resembling a circular saw). On the edges of these teeth are established images of Vishnu and other Gods. This subtle and symbolic serrated cog-wheel, called a 'Chakra', is turned by the powers of 'Maya' that virtually surrounds the Atma or the

pure self of the creature. [This Maya is a metaphor for the various delusions arising out of ignorance about the actual 'truth' that keep the creature going round and round in a cycle of birth and death by keeping him trapped in this wheel which rotates perpetually once it is set in motion by this Maya. According to Vedanta, the true identity of a creature is not its body but its Atma, which has its habitat in the causal body, so called because it is the 'cause' of everything that exists in this world. This Atma is an ethereal entity, and it is surrounded by the various Vasanas and Vrittis¹ (i.e. the different passions, desires and yearnings as well as natural temperaments, habits and inclinations of a creature) which have their foundation in Maya². Under illusions, the creature thinks that there are so many Gods, like there being twelve Gods such as Vishnu and others in this particular instance. The creature, in its true identity as the Atma, sits at the hub of this serrated cog-wheel (Chakra) as it slowly turns around it. So, the Atma begins to see these Gods one by one as they come into its line of vision, and begins to worship them one at a time as indicated by these Gods sitting on the top of the teeth of the serrated cog-wheel which is made to turn by Maya.] (60).

Propelled by the force of Maya, this 'serrated cog-wheel'³ keeps on turning, and the creature keeps on wondering in it, hooked to it like a spider moving around in all the directions in the web of its own creation (61). [59-61].

[Note--- ¹The innate nature and behaviour of a creature are determined by different *Vasanas or Vrittis*, or the worldly passions and inherent tendencies that it has. The Atma is unblemished and untainted by these notions, but is nevertheless blamed or accused of the consequences because it is the de-facto Lord or Master of creation and its faults. It cannot absolve itself of its responsibilities from these consequences. But this situation arises only when the creature thinks, though erroneously and fallaciously, that it is the 'doer' of any deed. This thought is provoked in it due to its ignorance about the immaculate nature of its pure self, which is the Atma. As soon as this wisdom sprouts in its bosom, the creature gets instant freedom from being affected by the different deluding notions simply because it treats itself as the uncorrupted and non-dual Atma, which is merely a witness and an observer of all that transpires around it in this world, instead of treating his body, which does the deeds, as his true self and getting unnecessarily involved in the deeds. The Atma is surrounded by a veil or shroud of ignorance which is like a plastic or glass transparent sheet, wrapping it from all the sides. No matter how clear and transparent that sheet might be, but it is not the same as the option of seeing and observing the truth and reality of the world direct without the intervening medium of the sheet representing ignorance and deception. So, any hint, any tinge of colour in this surrounding sheet of plastic or glass covering will make the Atma see the outside world with that particular tinge or shade of colour that appears in the surrounding sheet. Since it has no other way to determine the truth — other than removing the surrounding plastic or glass sheet itself — the Atma begins to think that the tinged world really, indeed, has that colour; i.e. the tinge is for real. But, as we see, this colour is misleading and an incorrect interpretation of fact, because it is not actually the colour of the world but is due to the presence of a tinged intervening sheet of glass or plastic. This is what is meant in this verse. The creature 'thinks' that it is seeing or viewing or observing this world with the eyesight of wisdom and erudition, but it is being misled by this 'tinged or corrupted' biased mental vision of the actual truth and reality by the presence of ignorance and delusion caused by Agyan, or lack of truthful

knowledge. In brief, what apparently appear to be the truth and the real fact is not so; it is a 'tainted, corrupted, biased and untruthful' perception and view of the real Reality and truthful Truth!

Vasanas are the different passions and worldly yearnings that are present as an inherent nature of an individual. The word here refers to the various passions, cravings, lust, attraction, infatuation, greed and yearnings that a man has for the materialistic world. It also means sexual pleasures, licentiousness. There are three types of Vasanas — (a) 'Lok Vasana' (लोक वासना) — meaning a craving for the world, its objects, fame and material acquisition, (b) 'Deha Vasana' (देह वासना) — bodily pleasure and comfort as well as self gratification, and (c) 'Shastra Vasana' (शास्त्र वासना) — a desire to learn more and more of the scriptures and be called a learned, scholarly person, an expert, leading to fame, glory and wealth.

Other faults, shortcomings or impurities that impinge on the purity of the Atma are the worldly Raag and Dwesh (राग द्वेष— i.e. attachments and aversions, envy, jealousy and hatred, infatuations and loathing etc. Further classification of the faults associated with this world are the following — (a) Birth — to falsely believe that the Atma takes birth, (b) Problems of existence, (c) Contradiction, paradoxes, ironies, perplexities, vexations, confusion, dilemmas etc., problems of development, (e) Decay and degeneration, and (f) Destruction and annihilation.

² *Maya* is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. 'Ma' means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of', while the second part 'Ya' means 'this or that'. 'Ma' has a negative connotation. Therefore, the composite word *Maya* means neither this nor that; anything that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term *Maya* is used to define these phenomena. Hence, *Maya* is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance based, illusionary, imposter, deceitful, invisible and para-natural; all that which has no reality or substance; all that is hollow. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth.

Maya has three basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called 'Trigunmayi' (त्रिगुणमयि), i.e. one which has the three Gunas or qualities. These three Gunas or qualities are— Sata, Raja and Tama. 'Sata' is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolution leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raja' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tama' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used as a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tama' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These three qualities together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sata' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tama' which

makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanours and mental setup in this world.

³The concept of the wheel has been beautifully described in Shweta-shwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 4 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. The cog-wheel of Maya turns and with it the creature sees the ever changing colourful canvas of the deluding world. It remains trapped in this jigsaw.]

62. A 'Jiva' (i.e. a living being having an Atma or soul) moves because he literally rides on the back of the Pran. That is, it is the vital wind called Pran which infuses/injects life into an otherwise lifeless and inane entity called a creature or a Jiva. Consequentially, the latter begins to show signs of life and activity because it is enabled to do so by the Pran. Without the Pran it cannot move or show any sign of life and activity. The Kundalini is present at the base of the Kanda and has an exalted position in the body, though it is located at its lower end¹ [62].

[Note--¹This is because it is the Kundalini that traps the cosmic subtle energy that all aspirants of Yoga seek to ignite and harness for their spiritual welfare. The location of this Kundalini is very significant—it is like a furnace in the body, and a furnace is with the raging fire is best situated at the bottom of the pile so that it can burn the firewood properly and evenly. Even in an ordinary household cooking oven, the source of the flame is always directed at the center bottom of the cooking pot to optimally utilize the heat.]

63-64. This Kundalini is so called because it is a coil having three and a half (3 ½) loops in a spiral form. Under normal circumstances, it tends to block the circulation of air, water and food in the body. It spirals around the Kand (mentioned in verse no. 59-61) like a creeper surrounding a tree trunk. It surrounds and blocks the 'Brahm Randhra'¹ with its tip. [63-64]

[Note--¹This *Brahm Randhra* is a hair-like joint or slit on the top of the skull. It is believed that the supreme Brahm had entered the creature's body at the time of creation through this slit. Great ascetics aspire to access Brahm by concentrating their attention here; at the time of death their Pran or the vital wind leaves the body through this opening.

According to Yoga philosophy, the Sushumna Naadi (a tubular duct in the body; nerve), which passes through the center of the spinal cord, goes straight up to it. This nerve is blocked at its base by the tip of the Kundalini. When the latter is activated, the block is removed, and the energy trapped in the body rises up this nerve to stimulate the brain, giving the aspirant a sense of spiritual accomplishment.]

65. With the practice of Yoga, this Kundalini becomes activated like a fire ignited and fanned by wind. [The 'wind' in this case is the different vital winds present inside the body.] Its flame sways majestically like an erect serpent's hood in the subtle space of the heart. It is illuminated and radiant like a burning fire [65].

66. The middle part of the human body is the place which is two fingers above the anus but in front of the urinary organs. In the case of 4-legged animals, the middle part is their heart region [66].

67. The central part of the body is called 'the navel region' located in the abdomen. It is here that various Naadis (the different tubular ducts/channels called the nerves and veins) present in the body form a cluster from where they radiate out to different parts of the body. [It acts like the hub for the Naadis.] The Naadi called 'Sushumna' has two types of subtle winds moving inside it—the Pran (the wind exhaled through the nostrils) and the Apaana (the wind which is inhaled and passes down the intestines). This nerve has four sections [67].

[Note—The word *Naadi* is a common word used to denote both the veins as well as the nerves of the body—the former carry blood and nutrients to the various parts of the body, while the latter carry stimuli in the form of electric impulses from the distant parts of the body to the brain, and from the brain to all the parts of the body. The Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition describes the Naadis in its Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 1, 9-11.]

68. The Sushumna Naadi is present in the center (core) of the Kand (mentioned in verse no. 58-59). It is like the filament of a lotus flower and it moves straight up in the upward direction [68].

69. This Naadi goes up to the 'Brahm Randhra'¹, and is therefore called the 'Vaishnavi Brahm Naadi'. It glows like electric and is especially enabled to provide Nirvan or emancipation and salvation to the spiritual aspirant/seeker [69].

[Note---¹The *Brahm Randhra* has two connotations---(1) the opening through which the Apaana wind enters the Kundalini to ignite it, and (2) the hair-like slit present on the top of the skull from it is believed that vital wind called Pran escapes out when an enlightened ascetics dies. It is also regarded as the joint through which the supreme Brahm entered the body at the time of creation.]

70-71. On either side of this Naadi (Sushumna) are present two other important Naadis known as Eda (or Ida) and Pingla. The Eda comes out from the Kand and goes up to the left nostril (70), while the Pingla goes up to the right nostril. Gandhari and Hastijihwa are the two Naadis which are also present there (71). [70-71].

72-73. Going behind the preceding Naadis, the Ghandhari goes up to the right eye, while the Pusa Naadi goes up to the left eye. The Payaswani Naadi goes to the right ear (literally 'the opposite side of the left ear'). The Hastijihwa and Yashaswini Naadis go to the big toes of the legs. The Alambusa Naadi goes downwards below the end of the genitals and enters the anus [72-73].

74. The Naadi called Kaushiki also heads down from the Kand towards the toes of the feet. These ten Naadis or nerves emerge from the Nabhi Kand (as described in verse no. 59-61) and radiate out from it [74].

75. Emerging simultaneously with these Naadis and branching out from them (like many tributaries of a river) are numerous finer ducts/channels which are no less important. Their numbers are said to be roughly seventy two thousand [75].

[Note---The *Naadis* and their functions have also been described in other Upanishads such as Jabal Darshan, canto 4, verse no. 17-22 of Sam Veda tradition, and Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 1, 9-11 of the Atharva Veda tradition.]

76. It is very difficult to count and list all these fine nerves and veins. They are spread everywhere in the body just like veins and capillaries found in the leaf of a Fig tree [76].

77-78. Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay---these are the ten vital winds which move in the Naadis (the veins and nerves) of the body. Out of these, the first five (Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyan) are more important, and even amongst them the first two (Pran and Apaana) are considered most important [77-78].

[Note—Refer Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 13-14.]

79-80. It is the Pran (the first wind) that bears life for the creature, i.e. it is the Pran which enables the creature to move and show other signs of life. Oh exalted sage! This Pran is said to have five subtle habitats or sites where it locates itself. These are---mouth, nostrils, heart, navel and the big toe of the feet. The Apaana wind has the following locations---anus, lower part of the abdomen, upper part of thighs and the knees. (See also verse no. 109-117 below.) [79-80].

81. The Samaana wind pervades in the whole body uniformly, the Udaana wind is present in the hands, legs and all the joints of the body [81].

82. The Vyan wind stays in the ears, thighs, waist region, heels, shoulders and throat. The other five winds such as the Nag etc. are found in the skin, bones and other parts [82].

83. The Pran Vayu (wind) collects the food, water and digestive juices in the stomach and mixes them to form a paste. Thereafter, this paste is separated into different forms once again---the fiber part of the food forms the stool, the water content forms the urine, while the digestive juices form the important fluids of the body such as blood and semen etc. [83].

84. The Pran Vayu does all this independently or literally standing all by itself and seeking no help from any other wind. The Apaana Vayu helps in excretion of stool and urine from the body [84].

85. The efforts made by the Pran Vayu, the Apaana Vayu and others to accomplish their assigned tasks is aided and complimented by the Vyan Vayu. The Udaana Vayu present in the body helps the latter to rise up or get up from a sitting or reclining position. (This 'rising' is a metaphor for spiritual enhancement also.)[85].

86. The nourishment and sustenance of the body is done by the Samaana Vayu because it helps in circulation of the blood. Passing of the wind upwards, such as during belching, is done by the Nag Vayu, while opening of the eyes is done by the Kurma Vayu [86].

87. The Krikar Vayu creates hunger, the Devdutta Vayu creates sleep etc., while the Dhananjay Vayu prevents the body from getting deformed immediately after death and delays decay of it for sometime [87].

[Note---See also verse no. 1/9 of this Upanishad as well as Jabal-darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.23-34 of the Sam Veda in this context. Further, Subalo-panishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 gives another version

and interpretation of these vital winds in the body. This Upanishad is chapter 6 of this book.]

88. Oh exalted Brahmin! These Naadis (ducts in the body) and Prans (vital winds) have different functions. One must try to know and learn about them for his own benefit [88].

89-91. The Naadis should be cleansed as prescribed for this purpose. Thence the aspirant should diligently embark on the next phase of doing 'Asans' which are various sitting postures for meditation. For this he should sincerely renounce all attachments and snap all relations with the external world and retire to a lonely, serene and secluded place where there will be no disturbance or distractions of any kind (89).

He should collect all the necessary paraphernalia needed for doing Yoga without disturbance and distraction. These include making a seat of Kush grass (it is a dark green variety of grass called *Agrostis Linearis*) and covering it with dark hide of an antelope (90).

He should endeavour to have control over his body and try to strike a balance between its two sides (i.e. establish an equilibrium between the left and the right sides of the body). For this, he should adopt any of the various Asans, such as the Swastik Asan (as described in verse no. 35-52 above) until the time he is successful (91). [89-91].

92-94. To begin with, the aspirant should adopt any of the sitting postures or Asans that is convenient to him, and sit calmly erect on it.

[Now, the process of Pranayam is being described.] The sight should be fixed at the tip of the nose, the teeth of the upper jaw should not touch the teeth of the lower jaw (92), the tongue should be held up so as to touch the roof of the mouth, the mind should be free from all tensions, worries and fears, the head should be slightly bent forward in a meditative posture (93), the hands should be locked (clasping each other), and the exercise of Pranayam should be done. [That is, after sitting in the Yoga posture as described herein above, efforts should be made to control the breath by regulating exhalation and inhalation.]

The Pranayam process involves first exhaling the air/wind present in the body, and then inhaling fresh air/wind from the outside. The latter is kept inside the body for sometime before being allowed to be gradually let out (exhaled) (94). [92-94].

[Note---Pranayam has been described in great detail in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 40-41,63 and 89-112 of Sam Veda tradition. It is chapter no.7 of this humble author's anthology of Sam Veda Upanishads.]

95-97. Pranayam constitutes of the following four steps---The right hand should be used to close the left nostril (95) and the wind present in the body is allowed to be exhaled through the right nostril in a gradual manner. Then, fresh air should be pulled in through the Eda nerve, or the left nostril, in a time taken to say sixteen Matras (the syllables or the vowel sounds of the alphabets). This is called the 'Purak' or the filling phase of Pranayam (96).

The inhaled wind should be held inside the body, in a process known as 'Kumbhak' or a filling of a pot, for a time which is taken to say the Matras/syllables four times, or a total of $4 \times 16 = 64$ Matras/syllables.

[That is, the time the wind is held in the stomach is four times the time taken to inhale it.]

After this, the wind should be exhaled slowly through the right nostril in a time that is twice that was taken to inhale it, or half of that time taken when the wind was held inside the body. That is, the exhalation time should be equivalent to the time taken to say thirty two Matras/syllables ($2 \times 16 = 32$) (97). [95-97].

[Note--- The sixteen 'Maatras' or vowel sounds are the following— A (अ), Aa (आ), E (इ), Ee (ई), U or Oo (उ), Uu or Ooo (ऊ), Ri (ऋ), Rii (ॠ), Ae (ए), Aye (ऐ), O (ओ), Ou (औ), Ang (अं), Aha (अः), Lri (लृ) and Lrii (लॄ).]

98. This process should be repeated by alternatively changing the nostrils used for inhalation and exhalation¹. Each time, the inhaled breath should be held inside the body for the prescribed period before letting it out [98].

[Note---¹The wind should be taken in first by one nostril, say the left, and exhaled by the right, then taken in by the right nostril and exhaled by the left. This process is to be repeated, each time reversing the previous order. Once inhaled, the wind should be retained in the body for a period as described in verse no. 95-97 above.]

99. Oh Brahmin! With this practice, all the Naadis become free (unclogged) for the vital winds to move freely in them. All the ten winds (see verse no. 77-78) which are present in the body of the creature and lend life to it, begin to flow freely and unhindered in the Naadis; they spread uniformly through them [99].

100. Consequentially, the subtle and divine 'lotus' present in the body and represented symbolically by the heart, comes to develop and bloom in all its pristine beauty and glory. One begins to witness or visualise the supreme Soul called 'Parmatma', who is also known as Vasudeo (the Lord of Vasus; Lord Vishnu), in that divine lotus-like heart [100].

[Note—See verse no.142-160 of this canto in this context. Vishnu is called 'Vasudeo' because he is the Lord of all the eight patron Gods who preside over the essential elements that came into being at the time of creation to sustain the creation created by Brahm, the ultimate Lord. Thus, Vishnu is the regent king who looks after the realm on behalf of the Emperor Brahm. The eight *Vasus* are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun-God (who provides energy and food), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water-God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire-God (called Agni), (vii) the rays and radiance of the sun (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), and (viii) the holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. According to Brihad Aranakya Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following-. Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets)]

101. This practice of Kumbhak (i.e. holding of breath by Pranayam) should be done four times a day—at morning (dawn), at noon, at evening (dusk) and at midnight. The

duration of Kumbhak should be gradually increased from 64 Matras (see verse no. 97) to 80 Matras (i.e. by another 1/4th period of time). So if initially the Kumbhak was done for, say, 64 seconds, it should be increased to 80 seconds [101].

102-103. It (Kumbhak and Pranayam) is so effective and potent that mere one day's practice can help the aspirant to get rid of or destroy the bad effects of all his sins (102).

Such a Yogi (ascetic who practices meditation in the manner prescribed herein above) is said to have successfully accomplished expertise in doing Yoga perfectly. In other words, he has accomplished the aim of doing Pranayam successfully. Such an accomplished Yogi is therefore known as 'Yog-Siddha'. Such an aspirant is deemed to be one who has vanquished or successfully controlled the vital wind forces, is successful in exercising self restraint over his sense organs, has conquered (controlled) his appetite and hunger and longing for tasty food, has also been able to overcome sleep (i.e. he is alert and vigilant; he is not indolent and lethargic). As a consequence, he shines with a divine glow and radiance which effuses from his body and surrounds him like a glorious halo. He is strong, robust and powerful (because he has acquired mystical divine powers and authority) (103). [102-103].

104-105. He overcomes fear from premature death, and therefore has a long life. The Pranayam that produces sweat/perspiration is of the lowest type; that which makes the body shiver or tremble or shake is of medium quality; while that in which the body starts levitating upwards is said to be of the best quality [104-105].

[Note---Refer Yog-chudamani Upanishad, verse no. 105 of Sam Veda tradition. It has been included as chapter no. 7 of an anthology of those Upanishads by this author.]

106-107. The lowest type Pranayam is also potent enough to eliminate or destroy all ordinary diseases and sins. The medium type is capable of eliminating great diseases or serious illnesses and more serious sins and their consequences. The best type of Pranayam makes the seeker sleep less (i.e. keeps him alert and vigilant), reduces (regulates) his urine and stool outputs (i.e. his alimentary canal and urinary organs function properly, as excess stool and urine are signs of some disease of those organs), and enables him to be contented by eating less. This results in his having a trim and healthy body. His intellect becomes sharp and focused; his sense organs function effectively and optimally. He is bestowed with mystical powers to have a sixth sense which enables him to know the past, the present and the future [106-107].

108. An aspirant Yogi (ascetic) who can successfully avoid the need for exhaling and inhaling breath, that is, who can hold breath for prolonged periods of time, becomes so potent that nothing remains impossible for him to do or accomplish in all the three periods--- the past, the present and the future [108].

[Note—This verse refers to the ability of the aspirant to withhold breath inside his body for an extended period of time during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam, without feeling any discomfort and the need to either exhale it, called the Rechak phase, and then inhale fresh air in the Purak phase of Pranayam. This is possible in later stages of Yoga when a person has become expert in this exercise.]

109. An aspirant Yogi who is committed and diligent in doing Yoga as prescribed and elucidated in Upanishads dealing with this subject, should endeavour to establish (concentrate) the elementary force of life called 'Pran' in his Nabhi Kand, the tip of

his nose and the tip of the big toes of the legs¹ during the regular practice of Sandhya² [109].

[Note—¹The *Nabhi Kand* has been described in verse no. 58-59. This process of fixing the attention on the tip of the nose or the big toe or the navel are part of meditative practice which help in concentration of the mind and its various faculties along with harnessing of the subtle energy present in the body of the Yogi.

²*Sandhya* is a religious sacrament done three times a day---dawn, noon and dusk---when prayers are offered to the supreme Lord. These points of time stand for the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose where the Avimukta area is supposed to be symbolically located in the body—the dawn is the meeting point of the night and the day, the noon of the pre-noon hours and post-noon part of the day, and dusk for the day and the night. See Jabalo panishad, section 2, verse no. 2 of chapter no.3 in this context.]

110. By following this procedure, the aspirant is able to become disease free and happily live a long life. By concentrating the vital wind in the region of the Nabhi Kand (i.e. the navel region), all ailments pertaining to the abdomen are cured or eliminated for good [110].

111-112. If the vital wind called Pran is held at the tip of the nose, one has a long life and the body becomes light (see verse no. 107-108 also). If the fresh air is literally 'drunk' by an extended tongue during the early morning hours before dawn, called the 'Brahm Murhut' period, for a continuous period of three months, the aspirant acquires mystical powers called 'Vaak-Siddhi' in which whatever he says becomes true. Further, if the exercise is continued uninterrupted for six months, then he is freed or liberated from great diseases. (See also verse no.106) [111-112].

[Note—The *Brahm Murhut* is a period of roughly 48 minutes before the sun rises. This period is very useful and good for health because the air is rich in oxygen and is pollution free. The tongue is moist and its surface dissolves this oxygen in its mucous linings. This helps in oxidizing the blood directly, and the fresh air helps to ventilate the entire system when meditation is done during this period before dawn.]

113. If the various parts of the body suffer due to different diseases such as stiffness etc. caused by various impediments in free flow of the vital winds inside the body, then such ailments can be overcome by concentrating the pure Pran Vayu (breath; the life sustaining vital winds) on those parts. [In practical terms it would mean reactivating sluggish tissues and de-clogging of the various nerves and veins, the blocking of which has created such symptoms which have been called the various diseases afflicting the body.] [113].

114. The inclinations of the mind create similar tendencies in the winds or the Prans¹. Hence, oh exalted Brahmin, it is imperative to control and stabilise the winds in order to control and stabilise the mind [114].

[Note---¹If the mind is restless and suppose it yearns to go to a particular place, then the wind force called Udaan, which enables a person to get up and move, becomes active and the man walks to that place. If the mind wishes to eat something, the wind force called Krikar becomes active and it creates pangs of hunger. And so on and so forth. Therefore, when the mind becomes calmed down, the winds that control

the various functions also calm down proportionally as a consequence. Therefore, the reverse is also true—i.e. to control the mind, the winds have to be controlled. Verse no. 83-88 describes the functions of the various vital winds.]

115-116. The Apaana Vayu (wind) should be moved away from the organs of action (where it is generally localised and active; see verse no. 80) and moved upwards (via the Kundalini). In order to control the mind, the openings of the ears (along with the eyes, nose and mouth) should be closed with the help of the fingers of the hands [115-116].

[Note---Its effectiveness is very obvious. When the four out of the five sensory organs of perception---ears, nose, eyes and mouth---are closed, the aspirant's mind will be free from being overwhelmed with disturbance creating impulses coming through these organs---such as the impulses of sound, smell, sight and taste respectively. For all practical purposes, it will amount to 'shutting the doors of the body to interference by unwelcome intruders'. With no unwanted guests to disturb the inner peace, the mind becomes tranquil and calm.]

117. When one is able to obtain victory over the restlessness of his mind and is able to calm it down, the Pran Vayu becomes regular and stable. Its natural passage through the nostrils is restored (i.e. a person begins to breathe normally and rhythmically through both his nostrils without them becoming clogged. See also verse no. 77-88 in this context.)

118-120. There are three principal Naadis (ducts or channels) in the body. [These are Sushmna, Ida and Pingla nerves.] Those who do Pranayam regularly and properly in the prescribed manner witness the flow of breath uninterruptedly and uniformly through the two nostrils for a prolonged period of time, and in a sustained manner as if the wind was being blown through the hole of the conch shell held in the right hand¹. Such a person is able to conquer or exercise control over his Pran or the vital wind forces that sustain life in the body of the creature (118-119).

Such an accomplished ascetic becomes empowered with great mystical powers to know about what is happening in the day, in the night, in the dark and the bright phases of the lunar month, in the different seasons, the path on which the world moves etc. by the stupendous powers of insight and far sight that develops within him. He has these powers built quite effortlessly in his wisdom and intellect (120). [118-120].

[Note---¹This is a significant observation because the conch shell is blown at the beginning, at every pause and at the end of a religious ritual. By citing it as an example, the sage wishes to emphasise that the flow of vital winds through the nostrils should be unhindered like the passing of the wind through the conch shell. Aside of this, when the wind blows constantly in this manner, it produces vibrations in the brain that resemble the cosmic Naad that pervades throughout the universe. This sound is like the blowing of the conch shell, and therefore the citation of the latter is most apt here. These vibrations softly massage the nerves of the brain, providing a sense of great relaxation and ease to the practitioner of Yoga. This translates into peace, bliss and tranquility.]

121. When the thumb and the big toes (as well as the fingers of the hands and the other toes of the legs) start becoming numb, one should realise that his end (death) is near at hand (imminent) [121].

122-124. When a wise aspirant Yogi becomes aware of such bad signs which indicate undesired and unfortunate consequences for him (i.e. omens which are indicative of imminent death), he should focus his attention exclusively on the ways to attain the only and ultimate end called 'Kaivalya', which refer to the merger of his microcosmic individual Pran (i.e. the vital winds present in his body) with the macrocosmic universal Pran (the all-pervading air or wind element of creation). [In other words, he should prepare himself to face the truth and whole-heartedly pursue the objective of emancipation and salvation of his Atma or soul. Refer also verse no. 148-150 of this canto.]

When the thumbs of the hands and the big toes of the legs become inactive or become lethargic and indolent and begin to disobey him, then he should be ware that his life will come to an end within a year (a Samwatsar). If the wrists and the knees become inactive, then he would live for not more than six months.

If the activities of the elbows and palms stop, then the end (death) is only three months away. [122-124].

[Note—The concept of *Kaivalya* has been elaborately explained in a special Upanishad of this name belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition and it has been published in this series of Upanishads in the volume dealing with this Veda's Upanishads.]

125. If there is no activity or sensation in the waist and abdomen region as well as urinary and genital organs, then life comes to an end within a month [125].

126. When there is no activity or sensation in the rectum and anus, the term of life remains not more then ten days. When the eyesight becomes so weak that the Sun and the Moon appear to be no more than glow worms, then only five days (literally, half of ten) are left to survive [126].

127. When one is unable to see further than one's protruded tongue, then only three days are left of his life, while when one cannot see the light of fire, then the death is only two days away [127].

128. All these signs are indicative of the fact that the duration of life is coming to an end. With their onset, one should endeavour to provide for one's spiritual welfare by diligently and faithfully getting himself involved in doing 'Japa' (constant and persistent repetition of divine Mantras or the holy name of the Lord) besides focusing the attention on Dhyan or doing contemplation and meditation [128].

129. The supreme transcendental cosmic Soul called Parmatma or the Lord God should be constantly, persistently, honestly and diligently focused upon, contemplated upon and meditated upon to the exclusion of everything else. The dying man should endeavour to become one with the supreme Soul. That is, he should withdraw his mind from the delusions and distractions created by the artificial and entrapping world of sensual gratification and material comfort and pleasures, and instead concentrate it on the Atma, the 'pure self' which is pure consciousness. This supreme and conscious factor should be symbolically established in the eighteen important and sensitive points in the body [129].

130-133. To withdraw or pull away from one place and relocate and get established at another place is called 'Pratyahar'. (See also verse no. 30.)

[Now the sage enumerates those points in the body which are important as stated in verse no. 129.] The big toe of the feet, the heels, the middle of thighs (130), the middle of groins (testicles), the anus and the rectum, the heart, the urinary organs, the middle of the body where the navel is located, the throat, the elbow (131), the gullet, the root of nose, the eyes, the junction point of the two eyebrows, the forehead, the root of the head (nape of neck), the knee caps (132), the roots of the hands (i.e. the shoulder, elbow and wrist joints)—oh Brahmin, all these are said to be the important points in a body made of five basic elements called the ‘Panch Bhuts’ (which are earth, fire, water, air and space) (133). [130-133]

[Note—In this context, refer Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 52.]

134. ‘Dharna’ is defined as inculcating a firm faith, unwavering conviction and honest belief in some concept as a result of contemplation and deep pondering on that concept by focusing the mind, intellect and attention through the medium of various ‘Yams’ which broadly mean self restraint of passions and desires, observing penances and cessation of worldly activities which cause distraction and restlessness. [*Dharna* and *Yam* have also been described previously in verse no. 31 and 32-33 respectively of this canto.] With the help of this symbolic boat, a wise person becomes able to cross this world-like ocean with ease [134].

135. The ‘earth element’ is said to be present in the body from the sole of the feet up to the knees. The earth is visualised as having four corners, a yellow colour, and is endowed with a hardness which is equivalent to that of Vajra, the hardest material in existence (and therefore was used by Indra, the king of Gods, to make his weapon from). [135].

136. The wind should be restrained as described above (in verse no. 92-112 dealing with Pranayam) for a period of approximately two hours or ‘Panch-Ghati’ (which is 5 x 24 minutes = 120 minutes) while focusing or concentrating the attention on the earth element mentioned earlier (in verse no. 135). The ‘water element’ is present in the body from the knee joint to the waist area (the lower abdomen) [136].

137. The ‘water element’ is visualised in the shape of a crescent moon, is coloured white and resembles the simmering silver. The aspirant should hold his breath (i.e. do Pranayam) for four hours or ten Ghatis (10 x 24 = 240 minutes, or 4 hours), all the while meditating upon the water element [137].

138-141. The ‘fire element’ is said to be present in the middle part of the body around the navel and lower abdomen region. It has the contours of leaping and swaying flame, and is red hot like vermilion. The aspirant should fix his attention on the fire element while holding the breath for six hours or fifteen Ghatis (i.e. 15 x 24 minutes = 360 minutes = 6 hours).

The ‘wind element’ is present from the navel region up to the nostrils. It is shaped like an altar or a dais, its colour resembles that of smoke or haze. This potentially powerful wind element should be meditated upon by holding breath inside (i.e. the Kumbhak phase—see verse no. 98) (138-140) for a period of eight hours or twenty Ghatis (i.e. 20 x 24 = 480 minutes = 8 hours).

The part of the body from the nostrils up to the top of the head at the spot called ‘Brahm Randhra’ (literally the hair-like slit or the miniscule hole through which Brahm entered the body at the time of creation and through which an accomplished ascetic’s Pran is supposed to exit at the time of his death ----) is the area

where the 'sky element' predominates. It has the shade of azure /light blue (141). [138-141]

142-144. A sincere and diligent aspirant should endeavour to concentrate and hold the vital wind force called Pran (i.e. do Kumbhak) in the subtle 'sky' region of the head. In the 'earth' element he should contemplate that the supreme Lord with four arms and adorned with a crown and tiara on his head (142), whose divine name is Hari Aniruddha, is present. In this way, the Yogi (aspirant ascetic) is able to, or acquires the competence to, or becomes eligible to attain liberation and deliverance from this entrapping, deluding and mundane world. Lord Narayan should be visualised as being subtly present in the region of the body having a predominance of the water element (143), Pradumna (a name of Lord Vishnu) in the region of the fire element, Sankarshan (another name Vishnu) in the region of the wind element, and the supreme Lord called Parmatma Vasudeo in the sky region respectively (144). [142-144]

145-147. The aspirant Yogi who diligently pursues this practice on a constant and persistent basis, is able to witness or have a first hand experience of the supreme Lord very soon; there is no doubt about it.

[Now the process or steps to be adopted to contemplate upon the supreme Lord Vasudeo, also called Narayan Hari or Vishnu, is being described here--] To start with, the aspirant should sit in any one of the sitting postures or Asans (described in verse no. 2/35-52 above) and focus his attention and concentrate his mind on his heart and imagine or think of the special features of it (such as it being lotus shaped, or having a subtle form of a divine swan, or a whirling subtle energy center called the Heart Chakra, or as one of the legendary abodes of Atma or Brahm) (145).

The sight should be fixed on the tip of the nose. The tongue should touch the roof the mouth, the two rows of teeth should not touch each other, the body should be held erect, and the aspirant should sit still/motionless (146).

He should employ his pure (uncorrupt and unbiased) intellect and wisdom to exercise control over all his sense organs. He should deeply ponder, meditate and contemplate upon Vasudeo (Vishnu) who is the supreme, transcendental Soul or Lord God of the creation (147). [145-147].

148-150. An aspirant is able to obtain the highest stature that is possible to attain, a state known as 'Kaivalya', by constantly and diligently contemplating and meditating upon that supreme entity which uniformly pervades his whole being, and especially his heart where the Atma resides. Thus, an aspirant who contemplates and meditates upon Lord Vasudeo by controlling all his sense organs (148) is able to destroy or eliminate the sins that he has been accumulating for his previous seven lives.

The 'waking state of consciousness' is said to be when the consciousness is dominant in the region between the navel and the heart; the 'dream state of consciousness' is said to be when the consciousness is dominant in the region of the throat; the 'deep sleep state of consciousness' is said to be when the consciousness is dominant in the middle of the palate of the mouth; and the last state called 'Turiya state of consciousness' is when the consciousness is dominant in the forehead between the eyebrows (149-150). [148-150]

[Note---The word Kaivalya refers to that unique state which is one of its kind and hence the name. Here, the ascetic's Atma dissolves with the cosmic Atma like the case when a mud pot is broken and the space within it merges with the vast space present outside, leaving no distinction

between the two. In other words, when the wise and enlightened aspirant dies, his vital wind called Pran seamlessly coalesces with the infinite wind element present outside his body. Refer also verse no. 122-124 of this canto.]

151-153. The state which transcends the Turiya state (which is the 4th state of consciousness) is symbolically located in the Brahm Randhra region of the head (the top of the skull). In this state, the ascetic remains face to face with (i.e. focused on) the supreme Brahm. Starting from the ‘waking state of consciousness’, called Jagrat, and extending up to the Turiya state where one witnesses Brahm, Lord Vishnu is the presiding deity.

[All the names of the Lord mentioned in verse nos. 142-144, such as Aniruddha, Narayan, Hari, Pradumna, Sankarshan and Vasudeo are all the different names of the same supreme Lord Vishnu----] This Lord Vishnu is another sublime form or divine manifestation of the supreme essence and the prime consciousness of creation called the Atma.

The spiritual aspirant should contemplate upon the clear ‘sky’ element (located at the top of the head—see verse no. 141) which is illuminated by a splendorous source of divine light which is equivalent to millions of suns in its brightness. [This ‘light’ is symbolic of the presence of Brahm there.] The aspirant should also contemplate upon his lotus-like heart which is the seat of that eternally self-illuminated Supreme Being personified in the image of Lord Vishnu. [It has already been said above that Vishnu is a manifestation of the cosmic Atma. Since the heart is the abode of the Atma, it follows that it is also the seat of Vishnu. There is another spin off to this observation—Vishnu is responsible for sustenance of creation, and love, compassion, mercy, graciousness, kindness and magnanimity which are the special qualities of the heart are needed for such a great enterprise as sustenance of such a vastly diverse creation. Thus, Vishnu’s abode (heart) reflects these virtues in abundance.] [151-153].

154-158. Having numerous and variable forms, shapes and manifestations, having countless arms bearing countless weapons (154), having different hues of complexions and visages representing different sections and aspects of creation, being a collective image of all the Gods at once, being calm, tranquil and serene, being potent, powerful, active and agile in every respect, being apparently angry and violent at times, holding numerous weapons, having countless eyes, having the splendour and radiance of millions of suns (154), and being an image of the entire universe in the manifestation of the Viraat Purush (who represents the sum total of all the gross bodies of this creation; the macrocosmic form of Brahm)---if an ascetic contemplates and meditates upon such a stupendously magnificent and glorious form of Lord Vishnu, then all the various Vrittis of his heart (i.e. the different tendencies and inclinations of his heart which are inherent to him and form an integral part of his personality) are totally eliminated.

Present in the center of the lotus-like heart, this supreme and indescribable divine entity is pure consciousness ; it is an embodiment of divine light (of enlightenment), is imperishable, eternal and infinite (156), and has a rounded and broad base like that of the tree called Kadamb (*neculea cadamba*)—a metaphor for being uniform from all sides, having a wide, all-encompassing and diffused presence, and being holy like this tree. This divine entity exists in the Turiya state of consciousness (which is the 4th and the most exalted state of existence for a creature), is supreme and transcendental, is without an end, is blissful and enlightened, is self illuminated and radiant, is Vibhu (i.e. is sinless, pure, omnipresent, all pervading,

eternal, almighty and majestic) (157), is steady like a the flame of a lighted lamp burning in a windless and quiet environ, and is endowed with an inherent natural glowing radiance and bright illumination that characterizes a precious gem or precious stone. By contemplating and meditating upon this supreme entity (Atma) that possesses these virtues, a wise and enlightened Yogi (ascetic) can have easy access to 'Mukti' (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) as if it was there right in his own hands (158). [154-158].

159-160. Whatever form of the supreme Lord that exists, whether as the vast composite and all-inclusive image of the cosmos in the body of the Viraat Purush as well as the different individual Gods at the macrocosmic level of creation, or as the gross, the subtle and the causal bodies of the individual creatures in creation at the microcosmic level—if a wise ascetic enshrines all these divine images or forms of the supreme Lord who personifies the whole creation and incorporates it in its entirety in his divine form, loving the creation and giving it place in his own lotus-like heart (159), and then the ascetic contemplates and meditates upon the Lord in this all-encompassing and ubiquitous form, then such an ascetic becomes one like the Lord himself. He is able to acquire the various Siddhis¹ (special mystical powers) such as Anima etc. (160). [159-160].

[Note---¹The *Siddhis* mentioned in this verse refer to certain mystical powers. They are 8 in number—(1) Anima the power to become so small that one cannot be seen; (2) Mahima to have influence, glory, importance, majesty, good name and fame; (3) Garima to have dignity, stature, gravity, weight, significance and importance; (4) Laghima to have the virtues of humility and simplicity; (5) Prapti the power to acquire anything desired or wished; (6) Prakramya to possess valour, strength, prowess, potentials and powers; (7) Ishatwa to have lordship, to be a master of the realm and the subordinates; and (8) Vashitwa the ability to control others; to cast a spell on others; authority; to subdue others. See also verse no. 100 of this canto in this context.]

161-162. [Samadhi is being described here-] After having acquired the knowledge of the essential nature and truth behind what is known as 'Jivatma' (literally the individual soul or Atma of the living creature) and its counterpart, the supreme transcendental Being called Purush, the aspirant realises the truth of the statement 'I am that supreme Brahm' (161).

This is called the state of Samadhi. All inclinations and tendencies of the mind and heart pertaining to this world automatically come to an end with this realisation. Any Yogi (ascetic) who attains or realises the quintessential truth about the supreme transcendental Brahm does not have to come back or take another birth again in this temporal, mortal and perishable world (162). [161-162].

163. In the above manner, a diligent and wise Yogi sincerely searches, researches and implements the various eclectic tenets, the doctrines, the irrefutable axioms and maxims of Yoga. Consequentially, he purges his mind of all worldly attachments, allurements, desires, passions, tendencies and inclinations which ultimately result in his becoming calm and literally 'extinguished like a previously raging fire'¹. [163].

[Note---¹That is, even as a fiercely burning fire dies down when its fuel is exhausted, all the agitations and restlessness of the mind of such an aspirant die down and he becomes calm and steady, peaceful and blissful. This state is equivalent to a Samadhi which is a trance like state of bliss when the aspirant loses all worldly awareness and remains engrossed in

constant communion with the supreme Brahm. He becomes steady and calm. Nothing ruffles him anymore. The analogy of the fire is most apt here because even as the fire can destroy everything around it, the fire of worldly passions and desires can completely destroy a man's inherent divinity and purity, shatter his composure and play havoc with his natural blissful nature.]

164. For such an exalted and enlightened Yogi, there remains nothing which he would like to seek or aspire for, because everything is available to him already. His mind and intellect have been enlightened about the paramount truth pertaining to the Pran as well as the Atma. As a result, his Atma and Pran both dissolve or merge or coalesce with the pure, divine, supreme and transcendental element in creation, known as Brahm, even as a lump of salt dissolves in water without leaving any trace behind [164].

[Note—Here, the individual Atma and Pran are treated as the individual lump of salt, while the cosmic Truth in which they merge upon self-realisation is likened to Brahm.]

165-166. To such an exalted Yogi, this world appears to be like a dream of an entrapping net made of 'Maya', i.e. the net cast by delusions and false attractions of a world which is itself false and mirage like). As a consequence, he goes beyond this dream and remains in a calm and tranquil state as if he were perpetually in a deep sleep state of existence called 'Sushupta' (165).

Such a Yogi rides on a path of ultimate emancipation and salvation which is called attaining the state of 'Kaivalya' (or the only state which gives him eternal peace and perpetual bliss by merging his own Atma with the supreme Atma of the creation known as the Brahm. This helps him to get rid of the endless cycle of birth and death.) Verily, this is what this Upanishad proclaims; this is what it asserts (166). Amen! [165-166].

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—10

MANDAL BRAHMIN UPANISHAD

This Upanishad is a dialogue between sage Yagyavalkya and the Sun God. It has five cantos called 'Brahmins' because this Upanishad primarily deals with the knowledge that pertains to the conscious Atma, and which ultimately leads to Brahm realisation. Each Brahman has a number of sections. The greatest value of this Upanishad lies in the fact that it was revealed by the Sun God, called the 'Mandal Purush', to sage Yagyavalkya, one of the most prominent and erudite exponent of the Advaitya philosophy of Brahm.

The word 'Mandal' refers to a vast territorial area or division, while 'Brahman' is a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent divine Being called Brahm. Since the questioner here is sage Yagyavalkya, one of the greatest exponents of Brahm's knowledge, and the teacher is the Sun God, the visible manifestation of the

supreme Brahm, who resides in the vast and endless sky, or Mandal, symbolically representing the infinite virtues of the supreme Brahm, and who is a Brahmin himself because not only does he teach about Brahm but is obviously wiser than Yagyavalkya, for a man always approaches a person wiser than himself whenever he seeks more knowledge, this Upanishad is cleverly named as *Mandal Brahman* to incorporate both the connotations.

The five cantos or Brahmanas indicate that Yagyavalkya had approached the teacher, the Sun God on five different occasions, and on each occasion the teacher had one or more sittings to elucidate the great knowledge, each sitting becoming a section or sub-canto. That is why, some Brahmanas (cantos) have more than one sections, while some have only one section.

Brahman 1 basically describes elaborately the concepts of the eight-fold path of Yoga, including such terms as Yam and Niyam, the Asans and Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna and Samadhi, as well as other metaphysical concepts as the various faults, the different forms of skies, their significance, the states of the mind and how they affect the behaviour of the creature, how the mind can be controlled, etc. This Brahman has four sections.

Brahman 2 describes the Atma which is radiant with self-illumination, and it goes on to describe the benefits of being acquainted with the truthful form of the Atma. Then the two Mudras (postures, specially of the hands, face, legs and other parts of the body) of Yoga (meditation exercises) are described in detail—such as the Shambhi and Khechari Mudras, along with their benefits and signs of accomplishing success in them. Other topics covered are how to hear the cosmic Naad or the ethereal background sound prevalent in the entire universe, what is the dispassionate state of the mind, the various states or planes in which the consciousness exists, how to obtain liberation and deliverance from this entrapping, deluding and materialistic world with the aid of Yoga along with the control of the mind. This Brahman has five sections.

Brahman 3 defines the so-called ‘Amanask’ state of the mind, i.e. the state when the mind ceases to have any relevance, and it becomes peaceful, tranquil and serene, leading to the Kaivalya (i.e. the only one and the supreme) state of existence of the pure consciousness. It has two sections.

Brahman 4 elaborates upon the concept of ‘Panch Vyom’, or the five subtle skies described in metaphysics. It has only one section.

Brahman 5 describes what ‘bondage’ is and what ‘liberation’ is. It elucidates on the results of Samadhi (the trance-like state obtained at the successful culmination of Yoga) as well as the concept called ‘Param Tattwa’, i.e. the supreme transcendental essence or the elementary principal behind whatever that exists, visible and non-visible. This Tattwa is the irrefutable and immutable Truth in creation, while all the rest is falsehood. This Brahman also has only one section.

So we see that this Upanishad covers a wide array of metaphysical and spiritual topics related to self-realisation and the search for the truth. It explains the various terms briefly and succinctly. Since sage Yagyavalkya was deemed to be erudite and wise himself, his teacher in this Upanishad, i.e. the Sun God, was very brief in his expositions, but the answers that he gave address the essential spirit of the questions asked by the sage. The very first verses of each Brahman outline the topics that are to be covered in that particular canto. Since there are five Brahmanas, there are five basic questions or topics as follows—(1) Brahman 1—What is the essential knowledge pertaining to the Atma, called the ‘Atma Tattwa’, and how to realise it? (2) Brahman 2—What is ‘looking inside and deep meditation’, how to do it, which is the object of this contemplation, what are the various states of consciousness, and

how does realisation lead to liberation and deliverance of the seeker? (3) Brahman 3—What is the non-involved, indifferent and dispassionate state of the mind, and how is it achieved, and what are its benefits? (4) Brahman 4—What are the five metaphysical skies, and what are their importance and significance? (5) Brahman 5—How is final liberation obtained by Samadhi?

This Upanishad has great resemblance to Advai Tarak Upanishad which is Chapter 11 of this volume. Both complement each other, both in the scope and tenor of the subject matter.

We would observe that the various topics overlap each other, and it cannot be said that a particular Brahman is exclusively devoted to it—viz. the concept of Samadhi is dealt with in Brahman 1, section 1, verse no. 9-10, and then in Brahman 2, section 3, verse no. 4-5, and then again in section 3, verse no. 3-5, as well as in Brahman 5, verse no. 8-9.

Similarly, the renunciate state of the mind called ‘Amanasak’ is dealt with in Brahman 1, section 3, verse no. 4; in Brahman 2, section 2, verse no. 4; in the entire Brahman 3; and Brahman 5, verse no. 8. Likewise, the concept of ‘Akash’ or the subtle sky is elucidated in Brahman 1, section 2, verse no. 13, and the entire Brahman 4. The various Yoga postures are described in Brahman 2, section 1, verse no. 5, 8 as well as in Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 2.

The great sayings or the universal truths enshrined in the tenets of the Vedas, called the ‘Mahavakyas’, are mentioned in this Upanishad as follows—(a) ‘That is me’, or ‘that is I’ is mentioned in Brahman 2, section 2, verse no. 5; (b) ‘I am Tej or I am energy personified’, ‘I am Pragya or personified knowledge’, ‘I am one and immutable’, ‘I am pure and non-dual Brahman’—these are mentioned in Brahman 2, section 4, verse no. 4; (c) ‘I am the eternal and immaculate Parmatma’, ‘I am that essence’, ‘you are me’, ‘I am you’ are mentioned in Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 6; (d) ‘I am Brahman’ appears in Brahman 3, section 2, verse no. 1; and finally (e) ‘You are me’ appears in Brahman 3, section 2, verse no. 2.

This Upanishad was revealed by the Sun God, the most exalted God—and the most splendourous one at that—amongst the pantheon of Gods. A Sukta (devotional hymn; a prayer dedicated to a Vedic deity), called ‘Surya Sukta’, is included as a separate appendix of this volume. This would add a sparkle to this volume.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no.1 of this volume for the meaning of the Shant Paath.

Brahman 1, Section 1

[This Brahman is dedicated to the various concepts of Yoga. Reference should be made to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2 which is Chapter 9, and Advai Tarak Upanishad which is Chapter 11 of this volume. Other chief Upanishads which deal with Yoga are Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan of Sam Veda tradition as well as Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda.]

1. Once the great sage Yagyavalkya went to the abode of Aditya (the Sun God), bowed before him reverentially and said, ‘Oh Lord Aditya! Please preach me about ‘Atma Tattwa’, or the principle knowledge which pertains to the basic truth, the essential form and nature of the conscious soul called Atma’ (1).

2. Then Narayan (here referring to the Sun God as a personification of the Viraat Purush or Vishnu also known by the name of Narayan) replied, 'Along with the fundamental knowledge pertaining to the Atma, I shall enlighten you about the various Yams and Niyams etc. which are collectively called 'Yoga' having eight limbs or parts (2).

[Note—(1) The word *Yam* means self control. (2) The word *Niyam* refers to the various tenets, regulations, norms, laws and rules that are to be strictly followed for success in any spiritual endeavour. (3) The *eight-fold path of Yoga* mentioned above are the following-- According to Patanjali who is considered to be the greatest exponent of Yoga, the latter consists of 8-fold path. These are briefly the following—(1) 'Yam' or self restraint; (2) 'Niyam' or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) 'Aasan' or postures for meditation; (4) 'Pranyam' or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) 'Pratyahar' or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) 'Dhaarna' or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) 'Dhyan' or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; and (8) 'Samadhi' or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation.]

3. [This verse describes the various Yams.]

To overcome the notion of feeling (excessive) heat and cold (and getting agitated about them), to have control over the urge to eat and sleep (more than necessary), to remain ever calm and tranquil (even during the greatest of adversities), to remain unwavering, unaffected and steady (like a mountain and the flame of a lamp protected from the wind), and to be able to exercise control over the sense organs (of perception and action)—these are categorised as the various 'Yams' (3).

4. [This verse describes the various Niyams.]

Devotion towards one's moral preceptor, teacher and guide called a Guru, dedication and diligent pursuit of the path which is righteous, auspicious and noble, having contentedness with whatever is available, taking up residence in a secluded and serene place that gives peace, solitude, tranquility and calmness, having non-attachment with and indifference towards anything and anyone in this world, ensuring diversion of the mind away from the sensual pleasures and charming objects of the materialistic world (i.e. having no hedonistic tendencies), having no expectation of any reward from any deed done or action taken, and having a sense of exemplary renunciation—all these are the various 'Niyams' to be followed by the seekers of true knowledge of the Atma (4).

5. [This verse describes the various Asans or the sitting postures during meditation.]

To sit in a posture that is comfortable for a long time without making the aspirant restless is called 'Sukhaasan'. To remain in a single posture without making any especial efforts to do so, i.e. without even being aware that one is sitting in that posture, is called 'Chirniwas'. [That is, any sitting posture that enables the aspirant to sit comfortably for a long period of time at a stretch is preferred to a formal posture that, though advised by experts, gives restlessness and makes one fidgety because such postures would not be conducive to concentration of the mind due to the pain and discomfort caused to the body.] (5).

6. [This verse describes Pranayam, or the various breath control exercises.]

Pranayam¹ is defined as a process involving three steps—viz. (a) ‘Purak’² which is done by using sixteen Matras, (b) ‘Kumbhak’³ which is done by using sixty-four Matras, and (c) ‘Rechak’⁴ which is done by using thirty-two Matras by the wise one (6).

[Note—¹The word *Pranayam* refers to the control of the breath employing various meditative techniques. It has the following three components as follows—

²*Purak*—This is inhalation of breath or fresh air through the nostrils. The time taken to do so is determined by the time taken to say or remember the sixteen ‘Matras’ which are the Sanskrit vowel sounds which form the basis of all Mantras, which are the various words or phrases made up of letters or syllables having divine and mystical powers. These sixteen Matras are the following-- A (अ), Aa (आ), E (इ), Ee (ई), U or Oo (उ), Uu or Ooo (ऊ), Ri (ऋ), Rii (ॠ), Ae (ए), Aye (ऐ), O (ओ), Ou (औ), Ang (अं), Aha (अः), Lri (लृ) and Lrii (लॄ).

The word ‘Matra’ here also refers to a measurement of time, usually in seconds. Hence, sixteen Matras mean sixteen seconds.

³*Kumbhak*—This is the stage when the inhaled breath is held inside the body for a given period of time. The time for which it should be held is determined by the time taken to say or remember the above Matras four times, i.e. sixty-four Matras are pronounced. This is because there are in all sixteen Matras, and when they are repeated four times, the total comes to sixty-four. It also means a time of sixty-four seconds.

⁴*Rechak*—This is the last stage when the held breath is vented out or exhaled from the body, taking the time which is twice the time taken to inhale it, i.e. the time taken to say thirty-two Matras. It also means a time of thirty-two seconds. Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/95-97.

The scientific logic is that the fresh oxygen-laden pure air that is inhaled inside the body is taken slowly so that it is able to energise the blood vessels connected to the nostrils and the lung-complex. Then when it is held inside the body for a given length of time as prescribed, it is able to oxidize the internal tissues and collect toxic gases and other residual waste matters that have gone up and collected in the lungs with the help of the various vital winds, especially the Vyan, Samaan and Udaan, and needs to be expelled much like the waste residual gases etc. are eliminated through the chimney of a factory. Finally, it is spouted out of the body during the process of Rechak, or exhalation.]

7. [This verse describes Pratyahar.]

Pratyahar is defined as the control of the mind and the intellect from getting engrossed with, attached to, lured by, or attracted towards the various sense objects of this material world. In other words, it is the control of the various senses of perception that compulsively impel a man towards this artificial world and consequentially get trapped in its snare (7).

8. [This verse describes Dharna]

Dharna is defined as focusing of the mind-intellect complex upon the truthful entity which is pure consciousness with firmness of conviction and steadfastness of beliefs, which would involve pulling the mind-intellect away from the objects of the senses, and taming its wayward and reckless habits (8).

9. [This verse describes Dhyan.]

Dhyan has been defined as constant remembrance of and contemplation on the universal metaphysical Truth—that the same supreme, transcendental, divine and pure entity is universally and uniformly present in all the living creatures who have a gross body in this creation/ visible world as their eternal consciousness (called the Atma) (9).

10. [This verse describes the essential meaning of Samadhi.]

Samadhi is defined as the state when the spiritual aspirant/seeker need not consciously contemplate upon the pure consciousness. He has reached the transcendental state of consciousness which is like being numb or being senseless when all thoughts cease. Here, even Dhyan (i.e. memory, recall, remembrance) is forgotten. Such a state becomes natural to an enlightened spiritual seeker; it does not require any kind of conscious effort on his part. It is a perpetual state of remaining engrossed in self awareness, and which is marked by total unawareness of the external world. [When this state reaches its climax, the aspirant continues to go about his routine work in this world, doing his duties normally, but internally he remains aloof and does not even remember what he has done and what he is supposed to do next.] (10).

11. All the above eight terms succinctly define the finer aspects of Yoga (which is contemplation and meditation upon the pure consciousness called the true self or the Atma). A person who understands these basic principles of Yoga and self-realisation becomes eligible and competent to attain Mukti, i.e. he is entitled to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul; he becomes eligible for liberation and deliverance (11).

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Brahman 1, Section 2

1. The body has five faults or shortcomings—viz. Kaam (worldly lust, desires, passions and yearnings), Krodh (anger, wrathfulness), Asthma or obstruction of breath, Bhaya (fear of physical harm), and Nidra (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties) (1).

2. These faults which translate into spiritual impediments can respectively be overcome by the following methods—viz. to be without any desires whatsoever, to be forgiving and tolerant, to eat less and moderately, to be strong, brave and courageous, and to constantly devote time and energy in contemplation and meditating upon the essential and true nature of things, called Tattwa Sevanam (i.e. to keep the mind from lying idle and instead keep it occupied in introspection and engrossed in deep thoughts of what constitutes the reality and truth) (2).

3. In this ocean-like intractable world, sleep (symbolising being ignorant and oblivious of the reality and true essence) and fear (symbolising consternation and feeling of insecurity)¹ are like serpents; cruelty and violence (indicating lack of such virtues as compassion, mercy, kindness, love, grace, benevolence) are like strong waves; avarice, greed, desires, yearnings and rapacity are like whirlpools; and the

desire for enjoying sensual pleasures from the company of a woman is like the slushy swamp (from where it is difficult to extricate oneself and remain clean).

To get across such a formidably powerful and relentlessly entrapping world, one should proceed cautiously ahead through the narrow tunnel-like path which is especially designed for this purpose. While doing so, one should not allow oneself to be entangled in the so-called three Gunas or qualities such as ‘Satta’ etc.¹ (because they bog him down in formalities of attempting to do what is good and avoiding what is not good, thereby sapping him of his energy and time.) He should rather concentrate his energy in realising the vision of accessing that Brahm which is called ‘Tarak’ because it can provide liberation and deliverance to the person, freeing him from the trap represented by this artificial and sensual world of materialistic objects (3).

[Note—¹There are basically three Gunas or qualities or virtues that are inherent in all the creatures of the creation. These Gunas determine what type of nature and behaviour that particular person displays. Since the possibilities in which these three Gunas can combine are immense, the nature, character, outlook, behaviour and habits of men also present numerous possibilities. These three Gunas briefly are (a) Satta are the righteous, noble and good ones, (b) Raja or the medium ones which are marked by worldly tendencies, such as having worldly passions and desires, and (c) Tama are the lowest ones which lead to commitment of sins and having perversions. If a man is too concerned by the category to which his deed and action belongs, and then trying to find out remedies to rectify the errors made, then he would have no time and energy left for pursuing other noble aims.

This does not mean that he should be licentious and reckless by not bothering too much in observing the restrictions on his conduct, but that he should understand the basic function of classification of qualities into three categories—which is to act as a reference manual to guide him when he is undecided what is to be done and what in not to be done. But if this attempt to adhere to codes of conduct causes more perplexities, doubts and confusions than removing them, then a wise person should not be too obsessed in such things, and instead focus his attention on his goal. And what is this goal? It is the ‘Brahm’—or the knowledge of the eternal and ultimate quintessential Truth, the purity and divinity of consciousness, as well as the various virtues that are incumbent with self-realisation—which can provide him with liberation and deliverance. This is why Brahm and the knowledge of Truth is called ‘Tarak’.]

4. The emancipating and salvation providing supreme Brahm, who is an embodiment of true, eternal and pure bliss, is endowed with a divine radiance, is self-illuminated, and is an epitome and citadel of all forms of holiness and divinity, is symbolically seated or located at the junction point of the two eyebrows¹ (at the central point between the two eyebrows and the root of the nose) (4).

[Note—¹This point is the site of the ‘Agya Chakra’, or the subtle energy centre which ignites erudition and wisdom in a man. It radiates light like a lighted wick of a candle. The light here stands for erudition, wisdom, sagacity, enlightenment and truthful knowledge of the reality. This is the site where the third eye of wisdom is said to be located. Hence, Brahm is deemed to be at the core of, at the centre of all types of enlightening knowledge that the creature has.]

5. As one of the methods of attaining it (i.e. accessing that Brahm which can grant the boon of emancipation and salvation), one should concentrate one’s attention on this ‘third eye’ (5).

[Note--That is, if one wishes to achieve success in attaining the truthful knowledge of the reality, then he should endeavour to acquire knowledge of that

quintessential reality, and to do so he must concentrate upon opening the closed eye of wisdom located at the place described in verse no. 4 above. Once this eye is opened, or once the light of knowledge is switched on, it would illuminate the aspirant's inner self and remove its darkness symbolising ignorance, delusions and misconceptions about the world, about his own self, and about the reality.]

6. Extending from the Muladhar Chakra (located at the lowest end of the abdomen, between the anus and the genitals) right up to the Brahm Randhra (the hair like slit on the top of the skull) is the Naadi (the tubular duct that carries vital energy and sense stimuli in the body; the nerve) named 'Sushumna'. This Naadi is radiant like the splendourous sun. [That is, Sushumna Naadi is glorious like the sun; it effuses light of life like the sun].

This is a very fine, hair-like filament that has its origin in center of the 'Kundalini' (which is the coiled energy centre located at the base of the spine, and which blocks the opening of this Naadi, unless it is diligently opened by means of meditative exercises of Yoga). By the awareness or knowledge of this Kundalini and Sushumna Naadi, one is able to overcome one's lowly qualities called 'Tamaguna'. By its symbolic 'Darshan', i.e. by experiencing and witnessing its stupendous spiritual powers which are effusing from it like an effulgence of divine light, one is able to destroy or annihilate all his sins and misdeeds¹ (6).

[Note--¹That is, when one meditates and is able to de-clog this Naadi by activating the Kundalini, the process of which is described in the Upanishads dealing with the subject, the spiritually-inclined energy which was until recently dormant and trapped inside the Kundalini is now released, and it goes up the Sushumna Naadi and activates the brain, i.e. the mind and intellect located in the head, with the right quantum of energy. That is, now the mind and intellect is getting noble and auspicious stimuli and energised by noble and righteous thought waves which symbolise the Sata qualities, instead of those that had negative energy symbolised by the predominance of Tama qualities, and which were denigrating and demeaning for the man.

This in turn makes the man more wise and enlightened; he is able to discriminate between what is good, noble and righteous, and what is not. This is a metaphoric way of saying that his Tam quality dominated mind is done away with, and its place is taken over by the mind that has better and nobler qualities called Sata in it. As a result, the man's whole personality, his entire outlook and behavioural pattern undergoes a dramatic change for the better. A wise and enlightened person would not commit any kind of willful misconduct or engage himself in doing anything that is not righteous and noble and not behooving of his spiritually exalted stature. This is the symbolic way of saying that his sins are destroyed by having the Darshan of Kundalini. It will be observed that this Sushumna Naadi resembles the wick passing through the center of a candle. This wick starts at the bottom of the candle and goes right up to its tip. Similarly, the Sushumna Naadi starts at the base of the spine and goes right up to the top of the head.]

7. When the aspirant closes his ears with the tip of his index fingers, then he hears a muted puffing sound as if a whiff of air was blowing gently inside the ear (which is actually the sound of breath passing through the nostrils). When the mind is fixed (or is focused, concentrated) on this sound, the aspirant perceives a bluish glow of light in the middle or centre of his two eyes (i.e. at the tri-junction of the eyebrows and the nose as described in verse no. 5). The same light is visualised in the heart (7).

[Note—This bluish tinge is symbolic of the colour of the clear, cloudless sky. It stands for something that has the qualities which are equivalent to the virtues possessed by the clean sky—viz. vast, fathomless, pure, untainted, infinite, eternal,

immutable and immanent. Knowledge and truth both possess these qualities. The point of the body mentioned in this verse is the location of Brahm as mentioned in verse no. 3 above. Since the terms 'Brahm' and 'sky' are often considered equivalent to each other and often used synonymously, because they have many virtues in common though the latter (sky) does not define the former (Brahm) in its entirety, and since the sky is blue in colour, the light effusing from Brahm, i.e. the light of enlightenment and wisdom, is taken to be of a blue hue. The blue colour stands for tranquility, peace and endlessness.]

8. An aspirant becomes an accomplished Yogi (i.e. an ascetic who has attained success in meditation and is able to subtly observe the presence of Brahm in his own self) when he is able to visibly see the sky tinged with various colours in front of his nose. These colours of the sky progressively appear as follows—at a distance of four fingers from the tip of the nose he sees the sky as having a blue colour; at a distance of eight fingers the sky appears to have a black colour; at a distance of ten fingers it appears to have a red colour; and at a distance of twelve fingers the sky appears to have a yellow colour. Besides these principal colours, the Yogi may also see the sky as having a mixture of these colours (8).

9. Through the eyes which are always fickle and restless, the aspirant sees these colours of the sky in front for a period of time. Gradually he is able to perceive some fount of light that radiates rays from it. [In other words, first he simply sees different shades of colours as mentioned above. But slowly, by constant practice, he begins to see a subtle point source of light in these coloured areas of the sky. This point gives out a light much like the tip of a lighted lamp or candle which is surrounded by a halo, and the different colours that appear in the sky resemble the various hues of colours seen during the day in the physical sky above the surface of the earth when the sunlight gets dispersed and refracted by different impurities present in space—such as moisture, dust particles, cloud etc. It is often observed in an overcast sky that the sun is obscured but the sky has changing colours, but gradually the sun appears as a faint lighted disc from behind the haze, and as time progresses the disc gets brighter and brighter till the time the sun is so brilliant and dazzling that no one can see it.] This vision gives stability to the fickleness of the eyes and the restless nature of the faculty of sight, and instead makes it focused, concentrated and steady. They are able to fix their gaze (attention) on a given target or aim or goal, without wavering and flickering (9).

[Note--In other words, with the regular practice of Yoga, the spiritual aspirant is able to fix his attention on the goal of his spiritual pursuit instead of wandering here and there; this fixing of sight is a metaphor for being able to concentrate one's attention on the chosen goal, which in this case is the realisation of the self, realisation of the ultimate Truth known as Brahm. It is like searching for the sun in a cloudy and overcast sky. When the cloud disperses, one is able to see the sun. Prior to that, one sees here and there to locate the sun in the sky, but fails. As soon as that point source of celestial light is visible, one fixes one's attention (sight) on it. The fickleness of the eyes would then stop because the target is clearly visible.]

10. As one progresses in his spiritual endeavour, by and by he observes (witnesses, experiences) a glow of divine light at a distance of twelve fingers above the head. Such a person obtains eternity (because he symbolically observes the radiant and splendorous Brahm shining above him much like the Sun God shining above the

world and giving it its much needed energy and light for its life and sustenance). This is the highest vision of Yoga (10).

11-12. The medium range of Yogic vision is like visualizing the sky in the morning hours when the sun, the moon and the fire of the sun are not there. That is, the sky is aglow with a diffused light that pervades it uniformly from all sides. From where this light comes (i.e. either the sun or the moon) is not visible¹. This sky appears to be vast and endless. With this view or vision, the ascetic symbolically becomes one like it—i.e. he also becomes one who has no end; his vision of life and his perceptions of the world become holistic and all-inclusive; his mind and intellect become lighted uniformly with the light of self-realisation which glows to dispel the darkness of ignorance much like the diffused early morning light in the sky that removes the darkness of the preceding night (11-12).

[Note—¹In the early morning sky at the time of dawn, neither the sun nor the moon are visible. The light that prevails at that time goes on getting brighter by the minute and the hour. Its appearance has removed the darkness of the past night. All these have symbolic significance here. Like the non-visibility of the source of light, Brahm is also not visible. But even as there cannot be the morning light without the presence of the self-illuminated and brilliant sun just round the corner, there cannot be existence and life, there cannot be consciousness and knowledge without the presence of Brahm just about to make its appearance if the aspirant has perseverance and patience to wait and welcome the experience of Brahm realisation just like a man who has to wait for a little more time for the sun to make its appearance with all its glorious splendour.

The sky appears calm and refreshingly quiet in the morning. The sky is an entity which is without an end. Similarly, a Yogi who has successfully realised Brahm becomes as calm and as infinite as the sky.

Again, as the light of the morning sky gradually goes on increasing, the spiritual enlightenment and divine energy of a Yogi also goes on enhancing by the day.

The divine halo that surrounds the Yogi is diffused like the light of the early morning sky—soothing, effusing in all its glory, and illuminating for others, removing their darkness symbolised by delusions and other faults associated with this world.]

13. [In this verse, the Sun God describes the other four subtle skies from the perspective of metaphysics. Refer also to Brahman 4.]

With due diligent practice, the aspirant Yogi (ascetic) becomes without any faults or blemishes that taint ordinary people; he goes beyond or transcends the reach of the three Gunas or qualities (which are Sata, Raja and Tama), and he becomes one like the sky called 'Akash', which is the sky present just above the earth. [That is, he acquires virtues which are similar to the ones possessed by the sky]¹

With greater diligence, perseverance and practice, he becomes one like the deep recesses of the space which has bright stars in it². This sky is called 'Parakash', or the sky which is beyond the ordinary sky or the one which transcends the normal definition of the sky.

Beyond it is the sky lit by a brilliant light called 'Kalagni' which resembles the light that appears at the time of dooms-day. That is, there is total darkness here, symbolising total peace and elimination of all awareness of the existence of tormenting life in this mortal world. This sky is called 'Mahakash'³.

After that is the sky called the 'Tattwakash'⁴, literally meaning the essential or the principal factor that is at the core of the sky element and acts as its defining

virtue. It symbolises the presence of the essential Truth, called the Tattwa, in the form of the fundamental virtues that characterise the qualities displayed by the sky.

And finally there is the sky which is radiant and splendorous with the light of millions of suns, and it is called 'Suryakash'⁵. [Brahm or the 'Truth' actually symbolically resides here. A parallel is drawn between the place where the self-illuminated Brahm resides and the sky where the splendorous sun lives to highlight the fact that just like the presence of the visible sun cannot be denied, the presence of Brahm too cannot be denied; just like the sun that illuminates the dark and fathomless bowls of the sky, the Brahm also illuminates the entire creation with its consciousness. The only practical difference between the physical sun and Brahm is the fact that the former (sun) can be perceived at the physical gross level of existence by means of seeing it with the eyes of the gross body while the latter (Brahm) can only be realised at the subtle level of consciousness. What the sun is to the gross visible world, Brahm is to the subtle invisible world. If the sun is 'true', then Brahm is also 'true'.] (13).

[Note--¹The sky is unattached with and to anything. The sky is illuminated during the day and it is the path through which the chariot of the Sun God passes. At night, the same sky is illuminated by the moon and adorned by the stars which appear like so many jewels spread across the vast sheet of the sky. The sky harbours so many varieties of life, such as birds and insects and other sky borne creatures of different species; all trees and plants grow up towards the sky, and they bloom in the sky, because if a flowering plant is closed in a box, it would wither away and die. The sky remains free from any taints and blemishes though it has so many colours that keep on changing their hues, but these are not the actual colours of the sky but are caused by scattering of the sunlight by the dust particles or moisture present in the air; the presence of innumerable heavenly bodies and debris do not affect the sky, nor do the presence of dark cloud darken the sky or the presence of the sun or the moon actually cause any change in the nature of the sky, for as soon as they set, the sky reverts to its original state of blankness and neutrality. Likewise, the Yogi remains the same no matter which circumstance he finds himself in; he remains uniform, even, calm, unruffled and taintless.

²The ascetic is compared to the Parakash to signify the fact that he has depth of vision and has reached much higher in his spiritual pursuits where light of pure consciousness automatically effuses from him.

³With progress of his practice, the ascetic is able to reach the state of perpetual Samadhi wherein the awareness of the visible world is totally eliminated. For all practical purposes, the world has become dark and dead for him. There is a complete silence of death around him. This is a metaphor for his state of mind that has ceased to exist vis-à-vis the external world.

⁴This sky is where the ascetic has an experience of the sky element; it also might refer to the state of consciousness when the ascetic realises the essential elements in their primary forms. This state is just before his one-on-one vision of the ultimate element—viz. the Truth, known as Brahm. This happens in the next sky.

⁵When he becomes more evolved in his yogic practice, the ascetic experiences a burst of divine light about him. This light is blinding and dazzling like the light of the heavenly sun; it is the light of self-realisation and symbolic of the realisation or witnessing of Brahm first hand.]

14. A person who becomes aware of this truthful eclectic knowledge is deemed to be lost as far as this material world is concerned, and he remains completely absorbed while diligently practicing the tenets of Yoga and described herein above (i.e. he becomes so engrossed in doing meditation and contemplation on the Truth that he loses all awareness of his own self as well as of the surrounding world) (14).

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Brahman 1, Section 3

1. The Yoga described earlier has two divisions—one called ‘Purva’ (i.e. the previous, former) and the other called ‘Uttar’ (i.e. the post, after, later half). The Purva Yoga is called ‘Tarak¹ Brahm’ (i.e. the Yoga which leads to realisation of the truthful Brahm which spiritually liberates the aspirant and delivers him from the shackles that tie him down to this body and its accompanying torments vis-à-vis the world), while the Uttar Yoga is known as ‘Amanasak’ (i.e. that leads him to become absolutely disinterested in this world and its illusionary charms, and consequentially lead a life of total renunciation and dispassion; such a man does not take an interest in anything pertaining to this deluding world and remains aloof from it; he remains engrossed in the bliss obtained by Brahm-realisation and thereby gets lost in his own self)².

The Tarak Brahm further has two categories—one is called ‘Murti Tarak’³ and the other is ‘Amurti Tarak’⁴. That Brahm (consciousness) which is limited to the sense organs is called Murti Tarak, while that which is beyond the purview of these senses and is even beyond the centre of the eyebrows (i.e. which is beyond the reach of even the mind) is called Amurti Tarak (1).

[Note—¹The word *Tarak* refers to that supernatural mystical authority that bestows liberation and deliverance to the Yogi (an ascetic who is a spiritual aspirant and a seeker of emancipation and salvation through the path of Yoga or mediation). Therefore, Tarak Brahm is that ultimate Truth the realisation of which sets the soul of the ascetic free from the bondage of this body consisting of the gross organs if he pursues it diligently and seeks to arouse his dormant divinity which had been hitherto lying dormant and concealed in his own self which is wrapped in a host of worldly faults represented by his inherent Vrittis and Vasanas (habits, tendencies, inclinations as well as passions, yearnings, lusts etc. which pertain to the body and the sense objects of the gross material world).

²That is, when a man has realised the ultimate Truth, he becomes disinterested in falsehoods. So when he has realised the supreme transcendental Being through the process of Yoga, he becomes non-interested in this material world of sense objects and the deluding charm proffered by it. Therefore, he appears to be taciturn and forlorn in his demeanors and his day to day interactions with the world. So, in short, by realisation of the truthful essence known as Brahm which gives him liberation from fetters of ignorance, delusions and the illusionary images of this world, and instead helps him to extricate himself from their trap and become self aware, the ascetic shows the least inclination to get involved in the muck once again, though he has to live surrounded in it because of the fact that his sublime Atma has to reside in the gross physical body till the time comes for it to leave it at the time of his physical death. Until that time, he copes with the world and the body, but is so disenchanted with them both that he shows no interest in either of them.

³The word ‘Murti’ literally means an idol, a statue, an image, a form, that which has a shape. Hence, the *Murti Brahm* refers to the pure consciousness present in the various sense organs of the body which directs them to do good deeds and religious duties as a means of attainment of liberation or Mukti. The phrase might also refer to doing meditative exercises which invariably involve the body and its sense organs which are an image of Brahm because the various postures and other means of Yoga actively need the coordination of the all the organs of the body. It might also mean physical worship of images (Murti) as well as observing other rituals that can only be done by the medium of the body and its sense organs, and not by mental

contemplation and meditation. Mental worship would be ‘Amurti’ form of adoring the Brahm, while physical worship involving rituals, idols and organs of the body would be ‘Murti’ form of adoration of the same Brahm. Though this is also a means of emancipation and salvation, but since the gross and perishable body and its sense organs have their own limitations, they are not as effective as the superior form of meditation which eliminates the need or interference of the body and its sense organs. Another interpretation is as follows—a realised ascetic has become aware of the fact that all the living creatures, in fact the entire animate as well as the inanimate world, is nothing but a manifestation of the same ubiquitous Brahm. They are all Brahm’s image, or Murti of Brahm. To show respect to each of them in equal intensity is equivalent to showing respect to Brahm. This awareness eliminates ignorance of the ultimate Truth about this creation—i.e. it paves the way for obtaining Mukti through worshipping ‘Murti Brahm’. In other words, the Murti Brahm has a discernible form and ascertainable characteristic features that are physical manifestations of the Amurti Brahm, or the Supreme Being known as Brahm that has no form and attributes.

But as has been pointed out in the Upanishads elsewhere, this form of worship might give success in achieving mystical powers called the various ‘Siddhis’ which can enable the ascetic perform stupendous magical feats, they are nevertheless not beneficial for him if his main aim is to attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death. That is only possible when he has disassociated himself from his body, or the ‘Murti’ (image) of Brahm because this body is synonymous with the fetter that tie a soul to this world, and when this bondage is done away with then only is true liberation possible. So although the body is an useful mean of doing Yoga, and although worship of the manifested (Murti) form of Brahm has its value and importance, but their usefulness is limited to physical aspects of Yoga and worship and not to their higher ethereal forms which relate to the final emancipation and salvation of the spirit.

⁴The word ‘Amurti’ refers to the form of Brahm which has no discernible physical shape and characteristics, which is attributeless and formless. There the term ‘Amurti Brahm’ refers to that consciousness which prevails after the awareness of the body is eliminated, that consciousness which is the focus of the mind and intellect, that consciousness which exists in the transcendental plane—that is called *Amurti Brahm*. It is that Brahm which is beyond the purview of the body and which has no form, no shape, no attributes, no manifestations, no definitions and no descriptions. In other words, the Amurti Brahm has a ‘non-formed’ form as opposed to its manifested image as a ‘Murti Brahm’. It is the ultimate Truth that has no form but is nevertheless the absolute reality and the truth of creation.]

2. Both these forms of Brahm should be deeply contemplated upon sincerely by diligent application of the mind, because it is only the light of deep insight and intuition which one gets with the eyes of wisdom and enlightenment that can enable and entitle an aspirant to have a first hand experience of that (glorious, magnificent, divine, ethereal, supreme, transcendental, eclectic and holy) Brahm (2).

[Note—This is the Brahm who is known as ‘Tarak’ because he can provide liberation and deliverance to the soul of the creature.]

3. With the progress in practice and over a period of time, there appears a glorious effulgence of a shaft of brilliant light from the pin-hole like subtle aperture said to be present between the two eyebrows. This light is synonymous with the Purva (previous) vision of Tarak Brahm (3).

[Note—By focusing one’s attention on the truth of Brahm with sincere and deep desire to know about him, to experience and witness him, the aspirant ascetic/Yogi first controls his sense organs. Then he concentrates his attention on the spot which is

called the 'Agya Chakra'. This is the subtle energy centre in the body, located between the eyebrows, which can unfold the hidden spiritual powers to see the unseen. By focusing of the mental powers of concentration at this focal point just like the beam of laser being focused on a particular object, that pin-hole is managed to be opened, and the inherent divine light that was previously concealed behind the veil of ignorance is now brought to the fore. The 'light of enlightenment' then shines through like a beam of torchlight, and it illuminates the subtle space in front of his nose with colours of different hues as described in Brahman 1, section 2, verse no. 8. Since the appearance of this glorious light is the first indication of the Yogi's success in Brahm realisation, i.e. that he has been successful in opening the hitherto closed eye of wisdom and enlightenment located at the central point of the eyebrows, it is called 'Purva Tarak' or the first part of Brahm realisation that would lead to the ultimate success in realisation of Brahm in its full glory in the later half, called 'Uttar Tarak'. Brahm is synonymous with enlightenment, so this light is the illumination emanating from the Tarak Brahm who resides in the aspirant himself but was hidden from his view until he had made a sincere attempt to unravel the great secret of Brahm.

Even as the torchlight can illuminate the path in the darkest of nights, this light of wisdom and enlightenment that comes with self-realisation can illuminate the spiritual path of the seeker of Truth.]

4. The Uttar division or the second part of this Yoga of Brahm realisation is called 'Amanasak' (as mentioned earlier in verse no. 1 above). It is marked by total elimination of the mind; or by the total non-involvement of the mind. That is, the mind has no role to play here. This state goes beyond the reach and purview of the mind-intellect complex of the Yogi. It is said that a majestic and immense fount of brilliant light resides or is located in the upper edge of the root of the tongue, or at the rear end of the palate in the mouth.

When the aspirant Yogi is able to witness and experience that light as result of persistent practice, he is able to acquire the various mystical powers known as Siddhis, such as Anima etc.¹ (4).

[Note—¹There are eight mystical powers that can be accessed by those who become expert in doing Yogic exercises. But it must be noted that these mystical powers can give worldly fame and glory, but they cannot deliver the aspirant from the snare of this cycle of birth and death. This is only possible by concentrating upon the Tarak Brahm located in the centre of the eyebrows. It must be understood that this Tarak Brahm is so-called because it has the potential to provide liberation and deliverance to the spiritual aspirant seeking it, and as has been described earlier, this location is the site of the third eye of wisdom and erudition. So it follows that what actually gives liberation and deliverance is the truthful knowledge of the reality, the 'true' reality and not the 'apparent' reality, which helps one to overcome the illusions of reality that are created by ignorance and delusions. Therefore, what is important is the acquisition of the correct and true knowledge which is laced with erudition and wisdom that can enlighten a person about his true self and the falsehood of the materialistic world of sense objects.

Brahman 1, section 2, verse no. 10 tells us that the divine light that is observed at the top of the head is the provider of eternity. Inside the body, it is the supreme Brahm located in the Brahm Randhra that is the final destination for the seekers of this light symbolising eternity. This Brahm Randhra is the hair-like slit on the top of the head. It is believed that at the time of death, a truly realised Yogi's vital winds called his Pran makes its exit from this slit to enable his Atma to merge with the supreme Brahm present in the vast sky outside his body. So, if the effulgence of light that is subtly witnessed in the central point of the eyebrows is known as 'Purva Tarak', it naturally follows that the brilliant shaft of light radiating out from the

Brahm Randhra on the top of the head would be the 'Uttar Tarak'. The word 'Uttar' also implies the northern direction, or the top, or the zenith. The location of Brahm Randhra is at the 'zenith of the body', and hence the Brahm visualised here is 'Uttar Tarak Brahm'.

So it can be safely assumed that the various mystical powers called *Siddhis* are sought by those Yogis who are not so evolved in the hierarchy of spiritualism because though these Siddhis bestow him with stupendous magical prowess, they don't guarantee his spiritual emancipation and salvation. That comes with 'Uttar Tarak Brahm' only. Nevertheless, those Yogis who have been successful in acquiring these mystical powers employ them for the benefit of others and not for their own selfish ends. These eight Siddhis are the following--(i) 'Anima' 'अणिमा' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' 'महिमा' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' 'गरिमा' is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' 'लघिमा' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' 'प्राप्ति' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Prakramya' 'प्राक्रम्य' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' 'ईश्वत्त्व' is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' 'वशित्व' is to be able to control and subdue others.]

5. When the Yogi focuses both his sights—the internal sight of wisdom and insight, as well as the external sight of the physical eyes—constantly, persistently, unwaveringly and unblinkingly on the object or target, which in this case is Brahm, then it is called 'Shambhivi Mudra'¹.

Amid all the forms of occult mystical practices pertaining to Brahm realisation, called the Tantra², this is the most profound and the most esoteric form of Vidya (knowledge and science). With this knowledge and awareness, one is able to get liberation and deliverance from this mundane, artificial, deluding and materialistic entrapping world of sense objects.

Worship of this truthful, transcendental and supreme form of Truth known as Brahm bestows the spiritual seeker with the fruit or reward of 'Moksha', i.e. it provides him with emancipation and salvation for his soul (5).

[Note—¹The *Shambhivi Mudra* is one of the various postures of Yoga adopted during meditation by ascetics. It involves sitting in a Padmasan (crossed-legged, erect spine and open palms resting upon the laps in the front) and concentrating one's line of vision/sight at a point on the tip of the nose or in the tri-junction of the eyebrows and the root of nose. See also Brahman 2, section 1, verse no.5, and Brahman 3, section 1, verse no.1 in this context.

²The *Tantras* are the mystical religious treatises supposed to be compiled by Lord Shiva, the patron God of ascetics and hermits, containing mystical charms and secret formulas for the attainment of supernatural powers. This occult science and its prescribed esoteric form of worship involve elaborate rituals, magical charms, use of mystical formulas and instruments, offering of sacrifices etc.

There are three dimensions of Tantra—(a) Mantra, (b) Yantra and (c) Tantra. Mantra is pure sound, and it consists of various monosyllables and letters pertaining to specific Gods much like alphabets used in algebra and other branches of mathematics as well as in complex physics diagrams to depict various coded information and data. Every sound has an energy wave associated with it which takes a definite form depending

upon the frequency, amplitude and other aspects as proved by an oscilloscope. The seed or root words forming the Mantra are the purest forms of sound. The Yantra is the physical form that these sounds take, and is depicted in the form of a diagram or sketch having various Mantras like a text book of music. Yantra is an instrument to use the Mantra much like the musical instrument is used for the purpose of transforming the magic of sound to produce a captivating and enchanting music which has a therapeutic value as well. Again, a Yantra is like an instrument of physics that uses various components to create a machine that can generate stupendous powers that are beyond the scope of these individual components when they are kept separately. The Yantra is like a figure in geometry that uses lines and different alphabets to mark various parameters, and then uses these parameters to deduce some fundamental truths of science, whether it is in the realm of mathematics or of physics. The Mantras are these coded alphabets, and the Yantra is the sketch that is used to tap their potentials to provide supernatural powers to the person who uses them.]

6. That supreme, mysterious, eclectic, sublime but indescribable entity subtly seen or visualised or experienced or witnessed in the bosom or the inner self of the creature is like a radiant, splendorous and bright fount of illumination. [This illumination is the glorious Atma which is pure consciousness personified.]

It can only be realised, witnessed and experienced at the subtlest level and not at the gross physical plane by great sages and seers. It is not visible or perceivable by any external or internal organs of the gross body (such as the external organs like the eye etc., or the internal organs like the mind and intellect). [In other words, the gross organs are not capable of grasping something that is subtler than the subtlest, and smaller than the smallest. 'That' divine entity is the pure consciousness known as the Atma which is the supreme Brahm personified.] (6).

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Brahman 1, Section 4

1. The 'Antarlakshya', literally meaning 'that which is seen inside', is that entity which is the object of deep insight and is visualised in a subtle form inside the bosom of the creature. It is said to be a fount of brilliant light emanating from a self-illuminated lotus with a thousand petals. Some say that it is like a most charming and beautiful 'Purush', or pure consciousness personified, who is secretly ensconced in the cave-like intellect of the creature. [In olden times, great sages and enlightened souls retired inside deep mountain caves to meditate and contemplate in solitude, hence the reference to a cave. It is inside the cave that great secrets of life were revealed to them, away from the glare of worldly delusions. In other words, this divine entity known as Purush is enlightenment and wisdom incarnate. This Purush is represented by the fundamental property of the faculty of intellect to discriminate and distinguish between what is righteous and auspicious and what is not. This magnificent divine entity which is the object of internal vision delineates a wise, self-realised and enlightenment man from an unwise, worldly, ignorant and deluded man.]

So many others believe that the eternally calm, peaceful, serene, tranquil, blissful and contented form of Lord Shiva with five heads, a blue-tinged throat and accompanied by his divine consort named Uma (Parvati), is the Lord that is the target of inner vision; he is the so-called 'Antarlakshya'. This Lord symbolically resides in

the heavenly space located at the top of the head (i.e. in the region of the Brahm Randhra)¹.

There are others who say that the supreme Purush measuring the size of a thumb is the entity that is worth seeking and witnessing in the bosom of the creature. [This Purush is in the form of the eternal pure conscious Atma present in the heart of the creature.] (1).

[Note--¹There is another symbolism here—the head is like the heaven for the creature because of the fact that it is located in the upper part of the body, and also because the supreme authority that governs all the organs of the body, both the external organs as well as the internal organs, is represented by the mind and intellect, and the latter are also located here. Further, Lord Shiva is regarded as the wisest of the Gods; he is personified bliss, peace, dispassion, renunciation, enlightenment and wisdom. He symbolises the virtues of auspiciousness and purity. He is the patron God of hermits, ascetics and monks. He remains perpetually in a state of Samadhi or in a state of constant contemplation and meditation. He is the only God having the third eye of wisdom indicating the fact that he is the wisest, most erudite and enlightened amongst the Gods.]

2. All the alternative forms described hereinabove are but the various manifestations of the same consciousness known as the Atma. Anyone who observes or visualises that (radiant and illuminated) target or object present in the inner chamber of the bosom (core of the heart; the inner self) with the conviction that it is the pure conscious Atma, is said to be firmly established, without wavering and doubting, in his beliefs, convictions and views of the supreme transcendental Brahm. [He is said to be the one who has had the truthful view of Brahm, without distortions of any kind.] (2).

3. The Jiva (the living creature) is the twenty-fifth ‘Tattwa’¹ or elementary form in which the entire creation exists. [That is, out of all the variations in which the creation came into existence, there is an entity known as a living being or a living creature with a body. This is a general term to define all living creatures that have a body—whether it be an animal, a bird, an insect or a human being. Incidentally, humans are included in the animal kingdom, and not, say, in the plant kingdom, or are categorised as any chemicals or metals or alloys etc. by even modern day scientists. In other words, ‘Jiva’ is a general term to include all living beings which have a soul.]

Besides this twenty-fifth elementary form of creation, there are twenty four other elements. When the wise and enlightened person thinks that ‘he’, i.e. his truthful and real identity and his essential form, is beyond any of these twenty five elementary forms in which the creation exists, then he comes to realise that he himself is the ‘Parmatma’, i.e. he is a personification and a synonym of the supreme transcendental Soul or Atma. He realises that he is the cosmic soul personified as the Jiva. [Here, the self-realised man understands the true meaning of the word Atma—that entity which is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and supreme, that which is beyond the reach and grasp of the mind and the intellect, that which is at the core of spiritual research and contemplation, and that which is the cause of all that exists].

When this realisation dawns upon him, he is deemed to be liberated and delivered from this mundane, artificial, entrapping and delusory world even while living in it with a gross and perishable body. He is called ‘Jivan Mukta’ or a person who has obtained liberation of all bondages in this life itself. [In other words, a truly wise man understands that his ‘self’ is the pure conscious Atma (soul, spirit) that resides in his own bosom, and it is distinct from the physical gross body. The Atma is

subtle, sublime and ethereal, while the body is gross, perishable and mundane. This awareness about the truthful identity, about his 'real self' as opposed to 'apparent self', liberates a wise and enlightened man from being tied to his pseudo identity known as the body. He kind of de-links his 'true self' from his 'pseudo self or apparent self'. This is tantamount to breaking free from the fetters of delusions and ignorance that had made him believe till now that his body is his 'self', and there is nothing beyond the gross body that can be called 'me or I'. As we have seen, this is a total erroneous perception of the true self.] (3).

[Note—¹The word *Tattwa* mentioned in this verse has many connotations as follows—(i) the true, essential and primary or fundamental aspect of anything; (ii) the elementary reality; (iii) the true or real state; (iv) the primary Prakriti-Nature; (v) the truthful nature of the Atma or soul of individual creature at the micro level as well as that at the macro level of the Atma which is universal, all-pervading, omnipresent, transcendental and almighty Soul of the entire creation; (vi) the 'Mana' consisting of the mind and the heart complex; (vii) the Sun; (viii) the universal, eternal elements that form the basic building blocks of the entire creation; (ix) elementary form in which the entire creation exists.

(A) According to Harvansha Puran, 14840, and Mahabharat, xii, 11242, there are *twenty-four* basic elements or Tattwas. These twenty-four fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the essential ingredients which go in to make up the body of a creature, and they are—(a) Prakriti (nature, inherent tendencies and inclinations, the fundamental truth about anything that decide its character and existential mode); (b) Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination); (c) Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness); (d) the eleven organs (five organs of perceptions—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue; five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory; one organ of intelligence—mind); and (e) the five vital Prans (the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apaana or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaana or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyan or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaana or the wind that helps to rise); and (f) the five perceptions (sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing) bringing the total to = 1+1+1+1+5+5 = 24.

(B) So, according to Sankhya Shastra, there are *twenty-five fundamental Elements or Tattwas* as follows—Purush (the primal cosmic Male; the Viraat Purush), Prakriti (primal Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25.

According to Mahopanishad, 1/4–6 of Sam Veda tradition, these twenty-five elements or Tattwas are the following—five organs of perception (ear, nose, tongue, eye, skin) + five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals, excretory) + one Mana (mind) + one Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) + one Pran (the vital life-giving breath; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life) + one Atma (soul) + one Buddhi (intelligence, wisdom, discrimination) + five Perceptions (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch) + five Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air, space) = twenty-five elements.

(C) The *twenty-sixth* Tattwa or Element is 'Hiranya-garbh', the cosmic subtle body of creation, or the cosmic golden egg from which Viraat had emerged.

(D) The *twenty-seventh* Tattwa or Element is known as 'Ishwar', the macrocosmic causal body of creation. Obviously, all these elements are junior to the primary source called the Supreme Being or Brahm. Therefore, the Supreme Being or Brahm is neither the creature nor the Purush; he is neither the visible world nor the invisible creation taken independently. He is beyond such limiting definitions. Therefore, he is has certain qualities that do not fall within the ambit of ordinary creation; he has some extraordinary elements that are beyond the realm of comprehension.

The concept of 'Jivan Mukti' has been repeatedly emphasised in the Upanishads. For instance, refer Painglo-panishad, Canto 3, verse no. 5 of Chapter 12 of this volume as well as Muktiko-panishad which is Chapter 19.]

4. In this way, while experiencing and witnessing the pure consciousness which is perceived inside his very bosom, that spiritual aspirant/seeker of the Truth gradually progresses towards the state of 'Jivan Mukti' (see verse no. 3), and in due course of time he becomes one like the glorious illuminated entity that was being hitherto witnessed and experienced inside his bosom. Gradually, this exalted state of self-realisation which has made him freed from the limitations imposed by the gross body also enables him to rise higher in his spiritual pursuit and become one like the sky which is infinite, fathomless, eternal, immutable, colourless and uncorrupt. [In other words, self-realisation makes a man feel freed from the limitations that are inherent in a gross body. This is because his 'true self', i.e. the Atma, is the universal ethereal spirit which has no physical limitations or boundaries to hem it in, or which it needs to overcome or cross over to find freedom. This spirit has the nearest analogue in the air or wind element which pervades throughout the sky, and it can go wherever it likes; nothing can tie the wind. Therefore, a man freed from the limiting fetters of the physical body assumes a symbolic form which acquires all the universal characteristics of the sky element. He becomes one without limits.] (4).

[Note--After one is able to witness and experience the presence of the self-illuminated and conscious Atma inside one's own heart, he realises that what he was hitherto considering to be his own self, i.e. his body, is not his true identity; rather it was a vehicle to carry him during his sojourn in this world till the time the effects of his past deeds do not wear out. He realises that his 'truthful' self is the glorious Atma which is pure consciousness. This awareness fills him with a sense of majesty and happiness because now he does not have to feel depressed by the various problems and inherent faults associated with the gross body. This sets him free from the bondage of serfdom of the body; he is liberated from its pains, sufferings, shortcomings and blemishes. He becomes his 'true self' which is glorious, magnificent, stupendous and powerful, and which is an image or incarnate manifestation of the majestic Lord of creation. Obviously, when one realises about his exalted lineage and heritage, he feels exhilarated and fulfilled, not having any dearth of anything.

In other words, such a self-realised man becomes literally liberated from the fetters of ignorance that had him trapped in the false conception that the body is one's true self or identity, instead of the Atma. Such a man is freed from the imaginary shackle put on his soul. He remains free from this imaginary shackle even though he lives in this world with a body. He treats the body merely as vehicle or medium to complete his worldly journey which has been imposed upon him or which he has to undertake due to the cumulative effects of his past deeds. He also realises his folly of

even thinking that he has done any deed, because he understands that the deeds are done by the body and not the Atma. Therefore, once these realities dawn upon him, he is not mentally and emotionally involved in any of the deeds done by the body in this birth, thereby accumulating nothing as ‘past deed’ that would force him to take another birth. This is called the state of ‘Jivan Mukti’.

The spiritual vision of a person who has realised the truth about himself and the rest of the creation consisting of the same Truth broadens to include not only the view of his own self as the conscious Atma, but also to see that Atma everywhere in the rest of the creation; his vision expands to include the entire gamut of Truth which is not limited to his own self but extends to the rest of the creation as well. A wise and enlightened man is deemed to have realised that the consciousness known as the Atma is the fount of all virtues, the very source and the cause of all that exists; therefore this Atma is also known as Brahm which is deemed to be the ultimate Truth and absolute Reality in creation as well as the cause of all that exists. This truth about the Atma is not limited only to him but it prevails everywhere just like the *sky* which is uniformly and universally present everywhere and is all inclusive; nothing exists that is not within the circumference or parameters or boundary of the sky; nothing exists outside the sky. Similarly, nothing exists outside the purview of the Atma, whether at the micro level of the individual creature, or at the macro level of the universe. This broadness of vision is metaphorically expressed by saying ‘he becomes one like the sky’.

There is another interpretation of this statement. The realised soul understands that the Atma and Pran go hand in hand, because consciousness and life co-exist. There would be no use of having any ‘life’ without the presence of consciousness in a gross, inane and inert body, and what is the use of having ‘consciousness’ in such a body that has no life in it. To illustrate, suppose the man’s body has life in it in the sense that it is alive and the man’s external organs are functioning properly, but suppose that man is stupid, of a low intellect, does not have proper mental development which is in accordance with his age, or lives a pervert life full of sins and misdeeds, showing no signs of having any awareness of what is right and what is wrong, having no remorse or compunctions of any kind. He shows no signs of having any ‘consciousness’ in him, he is not ‘conscious’ about his responsibilities and duties; he is not ‘conscious’ about the righteous way of correct living, and lives a life like that of an animal! Then say, what is the use of this man living at all?

Further, we have cases when people are artificially kept alive by machines and medicines, though their mind and intellect have been non-functional for a given time. What good is having such a ‘life’? Such a man rather becomes a burden on the society as well as on his own self.

Again, suppose a man is very wise and enlightened and conscious about his righteous duties and responsibilities. But then suppose that man is paralysed half down his body—that is, his lower part of the body has ‘no life’ in it. Then say what good is such consciousness which does not let him die and forces him to live a burdensome life like vegetation.

So we see that both ‘consciousness’ or the Atma and ‘life’ or Pran are vitally important for the man’s existence to be worthwhile in this world. So, the realisation of the ultimate spiritual Truth while still living in this world and having a physical body—is called being ‘Jivan Mukta’.]

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Brahman 2, Section 1

1. Then sage Yagyavalkya asked that divine Purush (the supreme macrocosmic Lord) present in the heaven personified as the illuminated Aditya or the Sun God, ‘Oh Lord!

A lot has been said about the entity known as ‘Antarlakshya’. But I could not follow it properly. Please elucidate more upon it yourself (1).

[Note—The term ‘Antarlakshya’ has been described in Brahman 1, section 4 above.]

2. The Lord replied, ‘The primary source from which the five Bhuts (i.e. the primary elements of creation, such as sky, air, fire, water and earth) emerged is as splendid and glorious as a radiant and dazzling fount of electric. It resembles the point from which the spark of electric streaks out. That point-source of the five Bhuts lies at the center of a square seat or alter. That dazzling and splendid point illuminates or highlights the presence of the Tattva there, i.e. it pin-points the source from which the knowledge, wisdom, skill and expertise needed to initiate the process of creation springs forth along with the five Bhuts. [Without relevant knowledge and skills, the five Bhuts were of no use. They would have been wasted. Knowledge, skill and erudition along with the wisdom of how to utilise them are collectively symbolised by the light that emerged from the primary core of creation. In modern terms we can call it the central point of the Big Bang—the cosmic explosion that occurred at the start of the universe billions of years ago. This explosion resulted in the creation of five elements of varying density which would, in due course of time, transform themselves into the various components of the creation, including the earth and the planets of the solar system. In other words, this point where the Tattva resided is the core of that Big Bang, and the basic ingredients for creation, which we call the ‘five Bhuts’ in metaphysics, are like the primary ingredients that were formed by this Big Bang. The very fact that some activity was there even before the bang occurred because it just cannot happen if there was complete neutrality and balance in the various forces of Nature, this ‘Tattva’ refers to that primordial factor, the ‘truth’ that was there when the first sign of life began to show itself in creation.]

This brilliant source of light is too mysterious and esoteric and secret to be understood by the limited scope of the human mind. It is beyond comprehension; it cannot be defined or described. It is not visible to the eye as the physical gross organ of the body has a very limited range of vision. It is best visualised by those who have the requisite range of vision, and this comes with self-realisation of the potentials of the conscious Atma¹ [2].

[Note—¹The phenomenon that was at the core of the creation did occur, but it was in some hoary past, in some far distant point of time and corner of the cosmos where even the mind cannot reach in spite of its stupendous potentials and powers to imagine and visualise happenings that cannot be physically seen or witnessed. That is why that Tattva is designated as secret, mysterious, enigmatic, esoteric and unknown. But the fact that it did exist before the beginning of creation and which resulted in coming into being of this visible creation, which is tangible and verifiable first hand and is not merely a conjecture or imagination of the mind, the existence of the Tattva and the occurrence of that original phenomenon that created light and the five Bhuts just cannot be denied. Therefore, that element from which everything else sprung forth is called ‘Tattva’, or the true and fundamental essence from which all the rest emerged at the beginning of creation and gradually evolved into their present form.]

3. That indescribable, mysterious and strange entity (described above as Tattwa or essence having the brilliance of bright light) is worth knowing by a person who has boarded a boat of Gyan, i.e. who has sought the refuge or the help of truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and deep insight to help him cross over this ocean-like world of delusions and entrapments, and arrive at the Truth.

That eclectic entity should be the target of knowledge and realisation by diligent efforts made sincerely, both by the external means as well as by internal means (3).

[Note—By saying that both the external as well as the internal means should be employed to realise the Tattwa or the Truth, this verse implies that an all out effort should be made to realise it. The external gross body includes the various organs of perception and action, while the internal body refers to the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect and the various vital winds. The external means to pursue that Tattwa refer to the harnessing of the external gross body with its various organs to devote its energy and efforts towards self-realisation and pursuance of noble goals instead of allowing them to indulge in self-gratification, in enjoying the sensual pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of the material world. It entails doing all noble things that can be done with the help of the body and which are conducive to spiritual upliftment of the creature. Some of these, *inter alia*, are the observance of various religious duties such as performance of sacrifices, giving of charity, observing the various sacraments, studying of the scriptures and following their tenets in daily life, doing the various meditative exercises, observing righteous codes of conduct, endeavouring to exercise control over the various organs and diverting their efforts towards spiritual upliftment of the creature instead of allowing them to be recklessly following their instincts and indulging in the enjoyment of the sense objects of the world, doing Tapa and Yoga etc.

Similarly, the internal mind and the intellect should be focused on the 'truth' instead of being deluded by the false charm of the external world and remaining restless. The mind-intellect complex should be focusing on the truthful illumination emanating from the bosom due to the presence of the consciousness instead of getting misled and tempted by the false dazzle and the lure of material enjoyment emanating from the world of delusions, which in turn leads to hallucinations that would make the helpless creature fall in a pit of ignorance in the long run just like the light of a lamp attracts an insect towards itself only to burn it in its flame. The charms proffered by the deluding world are artificial, for these charms are inherently perishable and decayable by their nature. They lead to denigrating the creature and cause his spiritual downfall, while the charm which is presented by the illumination of the pure thing called the Atma present in the bosom is permanent and it leads to the spiritual upliftment of the creature.

While attempt is being made to control and harness the body and direct all its energy and efforts towards realisation of the truthful 'self' which is pure consciousness called the Atma, equal attention ought to be made to the external as well as the internal body (i.e. the gross and subtle bodies). A coordinated and unified action will give greater success in any endeavour, while piece meal and disjointed effort done haphazardly in an impulsive manner would be counter-productive and ruinous for the creature.]

4. This whole world, both the visible and the invisible, dissolves and vanishes in that halo of divine light that is subtle and all-pervading. [That is, once the spiritual aspirant and seeker of the Truth sees that light, its brilliant splendour is so great that it eliminates the illusive darkness of ignorance which had created the false impression that there is something called the world that exists, and that this world is real. This ignorance-induced darkness creating illusions of a ghostly world vanishes as soon as the light of realisation of the actual truth dawns on the mental horizon of the seeker.]

That state of existence is beyond the limiting constraints and definitions of 'Naad'¹, 'Bindu'² and 'Kala'³. That supreme entity which is realised in that state is both Saguna (having a form and attributes) as well as Nirguna (not having any form and attributes)⁴.

An aspirant/seeker who realises this or understands the import of this statement, or who realises such a truthful entity, or such a truthful existence, is indeed liberated and delivered from the fetters that had been shackling him to this gross and perishable body as well as their sense objects and the materialistic world of artificiality and delusions (4).

[Note—¹The *Naad* is the ethereal background sound of creation caused by subtle vibrations in cosmic ether; said to be the first sign of creation and the closest approach to the supreme transcendental Being; represented by the word OM.

²The word *Bindu* means a dot or a fine point; here it refers to the center that generates this Naad. There is an entire Upanishad called the 'Naad Bindu' belonging to the Rig Veda tradition which explains this concept in elaborately detail. It is included as chapter no. 3 of the volume of Rig Veda Upanishads in this series.

³The word *Kala* has many connotations. It inter alia means shape, form, especial qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc.; a division, portion, phase or degree; any kind of discharge; brilliance, magnificence and grandeur; fraud, deceit and trick; maverick and supernatural powers. It also refers to—(a) the sixteenth part of the moon's diameter/disc, or one of the various phases of the moon; (b) the twelfth part of the sun's diameter/disc; (c) the division of time equivalent to about eight seconds; (d) one degree out of the three hundred and sixty degrees. So when these three terms, Naad, Bindu and 'Kala', are applied to that supreme Truth, it implies that the latter is so grand, so majestic, so magnificent, so stupendous that it transcends the definitions or parameters set by any particular word. That Truth is beyond their reach and dimension; the various connotations of the word cannot either be applied to that Truth nor can they define it in its entirety in any way. In the symbol of Brahm which is pronounced as 'OM', these three Naad, Bindu and Kalaa appear as a crescent moon or a shallow bowl with a dot at the center placed on the top of the symbol for OM. This Naad is like a big trough and represents the cosmic bowl or crucible in which the primary cosmic gel was placed to initiate the process of creation. The Bindu appears to indicate the pin-point source of heat, radiation or any other activating source placed just above this crucible to inject sufficient energy in to the primary fluid and activate it. It acts like a source of energy directed at the crucible (Naad) to set off the chain reaction that would ultimately culminate in the creation of this world. The Kalaa which refers to the various phases of the moon would indicate the different stages through which the entire process passed. But even as the parents of a child do not undergo any apparent change while the embryo develops in the mother's womb, the Supreme Being remained the same all the while the creation developed and unfolded in the cosmic womb represented by Mother Nature. Refer also to Subalopanishad, Chapter 6, Canto 6, verse no. 6 and its note.

⁴A person perceives that stupendous Truth, also known as the supreme Brahm, in the way that suits him best, that appeals to his mental bearing and perception of what the Supreme Being is or what the supreme Truth is like. There are a number of schools of thought, and their followers witness the supreme divinity in different forms. For example, the followers of school of philosophy that believes in manifested divinity as various incarnations of different denominations visualise that supreme entity that is essentially one and immutable whole in the form of their honoured deity. This is called the 'Saguna' Brahm because it has certain attributes and a form. Those who believe in the principle of duality, see him as Parmatma, the Supreme Being, whereas the followers of non-duality see it as the un-manifested Brahm who has no attributes. Similarly, the followers of Sankhya philosophy see it as Purush, while those who believe in Atma see it as pure consciousness state of enlightenment. Yogis/ascetics see it a fount of light and those who believe in the philosophy propounded by the Vedas see it as a manifestation of OM or Pranav. Those who follow the tenets of the Upanishads see it as the supreme transcendental Truth and the absolutely Reality that is beyond comprehension and words, that is at the very cause,

at the very root of everything that exists, that in which everything that exists would ultimately collapse and merge, and that which is the object of all metaphysical research and analysis. This Brahm has no form and attributes, and hence it is called 'Nirguna Brahm'. With such broad scope, it is impossible to categorise that divine, supreme and transcendental entity as this or that.]

5. [The various Mandals or subtle divisions of the sky that are discernible by a Yogi while he meditates by the Shambhavi Mudra are described in this verse. This Mudra or sitting posture is briefly described in Brahman 1, section 3, verse nos. 4-5 as well as in Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 1.]

The first division of the sky or space outside the body is called 'Agni Mandal' (or the sky or the Firmament which has the fire element present in it as its integral part; this is the sky just above the earth's surface because it is here one feels hot, and it is in the atmosphere of the earth that fire can be lit).

The second division beyond it is called 'Surya Mandal' (or the sky where the splendorous sun is located; the solar space of the entire solar system).

In the center of this (i.e. in the middle of the solar system) is the sky where the nectar-like (i.e. soothing and peace providing) moon is located. The sky around the moon is called the 'Chandra Mandal'.

Located in it is the glorious and magnificent abode of the eternal, immutable and truthful Brahm which is radiant, splendorous and brightly illuminated. It is called 'Brahm Mandal', and it has the dazzling illumination that resembles a bright streak of lightening.

These divisions of the sky are visible during the meditative posture known as Shambhavi Mudra (5).

[Note—During the meditation posture called Sambhavi Mudra, the ascetic observes these subtle skies and their changing colours. First he sees a raging fire, then it changes into a ball of fire resembling the sun, then this ball cools down to resemble the disc of the moon, and finally this metamorphoses into a flickering filament of intense dynamic energy with the intensity of an electric discharge.]

6. When that divine vision is seen by the Yogi (i.e. the ascetic who is doing mediation and endeavouring to experience the Truth), he perceives three symbolic forms or shapes—viz. the first is like the dark moon called 'Amaavasya', the next is like the shape of the moon on the first day of each half of the lunar cycle called the 'Pratipada', and the third is like the full moon called 'Purnamasi'.

These three visions are metaphors of the way the ascetic keeps his eyes open or closed—viz. the first Amaavasya is equivalent to his keeping his eyes closed during meditation; the second Pratipada symbolises his half open eyes; while the Purnamasi stands for his wide open eyes.

Therefore, the ascetic should practice meditation with fully open eyes because then he is able to visualise Brahm in its full glory (6).

[Note—The symbolism of the eyes and the various shapes of the moon are metaphors to emphasise the fact that one should see the truth with full attention, with wide open eyes, and with an open-ended mind because then he would be able to see and experience the reality as it exists instead of merely imagining it with closed eyes or understanding half of the actual truth with eyes that are half closed. In other words, one should have an open approach to spiritualism and be always alert and vigilant to enable one to see the truth whenever it reveals itself to him. The phrase 'open eye' is a metaphor for being wide awake, being receptive and alert, and witnessing each development as they appear in all their minutest detail. Nothing should escape the attention of a man who has a 'wide open eyes'. This situation is just the opposite of

‘closed eye’ when everything becomes dark. In other words, ‘wide open eyes like that of the full moon’ is a metaphor for enlightenment, wisdom and erudition, while ‘eyes closed like the night of the dark moon’ signifies ignorance and delusions which are as overwhelming as the pitch darkness of the night when not even the hands are visible. The symbolism is markedly obvious here.]

7. The target or the point where the meditating ascetic should fix his attention with open eyes is the tip of the nostrils. In the beginning he would perceive a dense darkness in the region of the root of the tongue (i.e. the back of the mouth, the rear palate). By diligent practice, there appears a bright fount of light with a divine halo around it in the background of this darkness (much like the full moon against the dark sky of the night). This is indeed a revelation of the eternal, immanent and immutable supreme truthful Brahman (7).

8. In this way, when the mind and heart, called the Mana, is deeply engrossed and firmly established in a natural state of uninterrupted and pristine pure bliss and happiness, it is said to be the successful culmination of the Shambhavi Mudra. This eclectic state in which the Yogi establishes himself is also known as the ‘Khechari Mudra’ (8).

[Note—The *Khechari Mudra* has been described in detail in Yogchudamani Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition. In this Mudra or sitting posture of meditation, the tongue is inverted backwards and tucked in the upper palate, just inside the anterior part of the throat. It is generally believed that it greatly helps in focusing attention. It also helps to conquer hunger, sleep, greed, unconsciousness or numbness of the sense organs, and keeps the practitioner alert and focused, etc. The apparent difference between Khechari and Shambhavi Mudras is that in the latter the tongue is not tucked inside the mouth cavity, and is therefore easier to practice.]

9. With its constant practice, the mind becomes stabilized and consequential to it is the stabilizing of the intellect (9).

10. The signs of successful accomplishment of this Khechari Mudra are the following—in the beginning stars are visible, then a glittering source of light resembling diamonds is observed, followed by the glorious light resembling the full moon. This is followed by the appearance of a multi-coloured scintillating display of light emanating from nine types of precious stones, gems and jewels¹. This is followed by the vision of a dazzling fount of light that is as splendid and blinding as the mid-day sun.

Finally, there appears a halo that surrounds the tongue of flame or the burning wick of a candle (10).

[Note—¹The *nine precious stones, gems and jewels* are the following—pearl, emerald, quartz, zircon, diamond, coral, cat’s eye, ruby and sapphire.]

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Brahman 2, Section 2

1. In the progression of appearances of different divine sources of light during the process of meditation, the next phase is when the divine light, which was hitherto witnessed externally at the tip of the nose (as in previous section no. 1, verse no. 10 above), is now witnessed internally inside the bosom of the aspirant Yogi. This

internal light has five heads or flames, and is therefore called ‘Panchabhimukh’ (or the one with five heads).

Its radiance is like the white light emanating from ‘Sphatik’ or white crystal. Its source is like a ‘Bindu’ or a pin-point (representing the mind because the mind has the capacity to be focused like a laser beam on its subject) from which the ‘Naad’ originates (i.e. the cosmic vibrations that generated the first signs of life in the form of sound waves in ether appears to be emanating from the Bindu). It’s majesty and glory symbolises the various ‘Kalaas’ (which literally means a phase or aspect of any given entity, alluding here to the ever changing forms of the flickering light having five colours in its flame; it also refers to the 16 divine virtues that are present as the basic defining qualities inherent in creation). These fluctuating and ever changing virtues are like the numerous ‘Nakshatras’ or stars sprinkled throughout the sky, resembling the countless twinkling sparklers radiating out from that divine source of light. Another resemblance is with the fire-worm or the glow-worm, the lighted lamp, the eye (which lights up the world for the creature), gold (which is self-glowing and radiant when hot), and like the nine precious stones or gems which glitter in their magnificence (as described in note to verse no. 10, section 1 of this Brahman above).

Verily, this light is a visible manifestation of ‘Pranav’ (or the cosmic all-pervading Brahm for which the word OM is used as an address; it is a synonym for the invisible and un-manifest supreme transcendental entity known as ‘Brahm’, or the pure consciousness of the universe which has revealed itself as a fount of splendorous light of the conscious Atma residing in the bosom of the Yogi) (1).

[Note—These 16 Kalaas, or divine virtues, have been described in detail in a note to verse no. 6 of Canto 6 of Subalo-panishad which is Chapter no. 6 of this volume.]

2. [This verse briefly describes how ‘Naad’, the cosmic sound which pervades throughout the universe, can be heard by the mediating ascetic or Yogi.]

The aspirant Yogi should merge the two vital winds—the Pran and Apan— and hold them together in his stomach or abdomen. This is called ‘Kumbhak’, or ‘holding of the breath’ aspect of wind control exercise in Yoga¹.

Then the sight should be firmly fixed and focused at the tip of the nose. The fingers of both the hands should be used (to close the opening of the nose, ears and mouth which enables the aspirant Yogi) to achieve success in going through the process of ‘Shanmukhi Mudra’².

With successful practice of this posture, the aspirant is enabled to hear the ethereal cosmic sound called Pranav (or OM). This sound completely absorbs the attention of the Yogi³ (2).

[Note—¹The *Pran* is the most important vital wind in the body amongst the various winds that sustain life in the creature’s body. It is synonymous with breath which is inhaled and then exhaled through the nostrils. This Pran is synonymous with life also because without it, life simply cannot exist. The *Apan* wind is the wind which passes down the intestines, and extends right from the cavity of the mouth to the opening of the anus; it helps in ingestion of food, its digestion in the alimentary canal, and its excretion. Both the winds are equally important, for without Pran a person wouldn’t be able to breath and would suffocate to death, while without Apan he wouldn’t be able to digest food and excrete waste matters from the body. The Apan wind becomes hot due to its passage in the body, especially the intestines, and it acts like heated air in a chimney that goes up.

According to the principles of Yoga, the exercise that helps to control the vital winds is called Pranayam. Essentially, it consists of three phases—viz. the inhalation of breath called ‘Purak’ (literally meaning filling) when breath is drawn in, the

holding of it inside the body called 'Kumbhak' (literally meaning to fill a pitcher), and its slowly exhalation through the nostrils called 'Rechak' (literally meaning cleansing or purging).

So, when the fresh oxygen-laden breath is held inside the body during the *Kumbhak* phase of Yoga, the tissues of the body get proper time to absorb the oxygen brought in by the Pran when it was inhaled. Meanwhile, the impure toxic gases created during the process of digestion of food inside the body are collected by the heated Apan wind. They are brought to the upper part of the body, and they get mixed with the Pran wind while it is being held inside the abdomen/stomach during the Kumbhak phase. Basically, this phase is like holding air in a balloon before it is vented out through the nostrils during the Rechak phase. Refer also to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/95-117 which is Chapter no. 9 of this volume.

²The *Shanmukhi Mudra* is done to control and harness the mind, to regulate the two vital winds etc. It helps to provide bliss by diverting the vital winds from either going out through the nostrils (Pran) or through the anus (Apan). Instead, these winds are trained to move up into the top of the head to enter the area called 'Brahm Randhra' which is a hair like slit in the skull. To practice this Mudra or posture of Yoga/meditation, the aspirant should sit in a Swastik posture, pull up the Apan wind (i.e. prevent it from escaping as flatus from the anus), slowly repeat the divine syllables of Pranav or OM, close the ears with the thumb, the eyes with the first fingers (the index finger), and the nose with the other fingers. The breath should also be simultaneously held as done during Kumbhak. This meditative posture should be continued as long as the aspirant feels the sensation of bliss. The mixed winds (i.e. the Pran and Apan) which have been trapped inside the body get heated while being held in Kumbhak phase. Being lighter than the earlier cool wind, the mixed wind now rises up into the head to enter the area on its top, called the Brahm Randhra. When this is achieved, the aspirant Yogi experiences weird sounds in his head, which are nothing but the cosmic Naad.

³That is, once this sound is heard, its vibrations have such an effect on the nerves of the brain, especially the mind, that the aspirant literally drowns in the ocean of cosmic sound waves emanating from the cosmic Naad called *Pranav* or OM so much so that he loses awareness of everything else, both his own self as well as the external world around him. He lives in a state of perpetual bliss and appears to be engulfed by waves of surging exhilaration just like a man who listens to enchanting music with ear-plugs is oblivious of the surrounding world. This ocean of sound drowns him. The pulsating waves of sound emanating from the Naad act like vibrators which caress and massage the nerves of the brain, resulting in their becoming calm, relaxed and quiet. Naad therefore also has a tranquilizing effect on the Yogi. This state of stupefaction and numbness of the senses, the sedative and intoxicating effect that is brought about on hearing this Naad is extremely subtle, sublime and divine in nature rather than the gross forms of numbness of the senses brought about by worldly sounds like listening to loud rock music, but this example would help one to grasp how the Yogi must feel when he hears that Naad.]

3. A person who practices these meditation exercises is not bound by the obligation to do other religious deeds and observe certain religious sacraments. Religious rituals and sacraments are traditionally done at the time of the sun rise or at sun set, but the sun representing the pure, illuminated and eternal consciousness, known as the 'Chidadiya'—or the Sun God called Aditya who is symbolically present inside the bosom of all the creatures as their consciousness—shines perpetually, i.e. it never rises or sets. Therefore, there is no need for a self-realised and enlightened person, who has realised this fact about the symbolic form of Sun God's presence in his very own bosom, to bother about the daily offering of sacred rituals and observance of religious sacraments at every sun rise and sun set in the external world (3).

[Note—Since the light of pure consciousness is invariably present inside the very self of all the creatures, only those who are not aware of this spiritual fact spend their time and energy in offering prayers and oblations to the external form of that light represented by the celestial sun in the sky when they perform various rituals and sacraments every morning and evening. But for those who are awakened to the fact that the external sun does not have an eternal presence because it rises and sets on a daily basis as compared to the splendid sun present in the subtle sky of their own heart as pure enlightened consciousness or in their mind-intellect as the light of their truthful knowledge, intelligence, insight, wisdom and erudition as well as the various skills and expertise that they possess that lightens up their inner self and their life in so many ways, then such self-realised persons do not feel the need to do or observe rituals for attaining access to something that is not eternal. They would rather pursue something that gives them steady and long term blessings.]

When this philosophy is extended to their ordinary mundane lives, they do not think it mandatory to observe special formalities in order to attain their spiritual goals and provide for their welfare. They would prefer to treat their entire life as one big religious ritual rather than limiting their noble goal of spiritual enhancement to the performance of specific auspicious and righteous deeds. In other words, they are freed from the necessity of doing specific auspicious, righteous and noble deeds, for all the deeds done by them become exemplary examples of righteousness and auspiciousness. Their holiness and piety radiates out from them and shines perpetually upon the world like the sunlight that lights up the world around it, with the only difference that the sunlight lasts only till the time the celestial sun is in the sky and it is not covered by the blanket of clouds, whereas the divine light of holiness and spirituality emanating from self-realised souls is perpetual and even lasts after they have left their mortal bodies.]

4. When the ‘Shabda’, or words, fall silent (i.e. when there is utter silence and nothing to speak about; or when a situation arises which words cannot describe), and when ‘Kaal’, or time and circumstance, do not matter or exist, then a person goes beyond the purview of worldly expectations and regulations imposed by the cycle of day and night (such as the convention of doing work during the day thereby necessitating the use of words, and to sleep during the night when no talking is done).

When true self-realisation dawned upon him, he goes beyond the necessity of observing formalities; this state instills a sense of indifference in him; he becomes aloof to all worldly considerations and the need to adhere to conventions. This state of immunity from all worldly distractions is called ‘Unmānya’. [It is a state of being totally engrossed and submerged in hearing of the cosmic Naad as described in verse no. 2 above in an endless, unbroken, continuous stream of cosmic vibrations resonating in the aspirant’s mind that makes it numbed or immune to the reception of all external stimuli from this world that would otherwise cause continuous restlessness, agitations and distractions for him and hinder his desire for eternal bliss and peace.]

When this state of complete detachment, of total aloofness and absolute indifference towards this world becomes ripe and a natural affair with the self-realised person, then he becomes one with Brahm. He also resembles one who has no interest in the mundane affairs of the material world, and such persons are called ‘Amanask’, or one whose mind and heart have lost all interests in the attractions offered by the world, and consequentially has obtained perpetual bliss, peace and tranquility. [Refer Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 1 also.] (4).

5. [In this verse, symbolism and metaphors are used to describe the worship of the supreme formless and attributeless Brahm in a ritualistic form of worship that is usually adopted to worship deities with forms and attributes. The idea is to draw attention towards the hidden meaning behind formal ritualistic patterns adopted for worship of any deity, and inculcate awareness in people who do formal rituals in a mechanical way without the requisite wisdom and understanding of their spiritual and metaphysical import. Without knowledge, any exercise will become meaningless, and with proper understanding that same exercise not only gives satisfaction of intellectual fulfillment but also proves more beneficial for the aspirant, for then he would be able not only to fine tune them according to his specific needs but also fine tune himself if he finds any shortcomings in himself. This verse tells the worshipper that the various physical rituals performed during formal forms of offering of worship process can be transformed to a higher and more evolved and sublime form of worship of the primary source of all divinity if one just has the inclination, the desire, the mental setup, the caliber, the knowledge, the wisdom and the guidance to do so. This verse establishes a link between those who prescribe to the philosophy of duality, i.e. who believe in incarnations, and those who do not prescribe to that philosophy and believe only on the pure non-dual Atma which is one and universal, and which does not need any formal forms of worship or rituals for its realisation.]

To be in a state of being without any kind of worries and cares is tantamount to 'his' (Brahm's) Dhyan (or constantly remembering and concentrating one's mind upon the chosen deity).

[This is because when one focuses one's mind upon the supreme Brahm, the mind is freed from getting bogged down or entangled in worldly worries and cares that confound the man.]

To remain non-involved and non-committal in deeds and thereby eliminating their influences upon the Atma and the self is like the symbolic invocation of the deity and formally inviting the Lord at the time of formal forms of worship.

[This implies that one does not allow himself to get emotionally involved in any deed, but do them with dispassion and selfless attitude as a sacred duty offered to the Lord or the chosen deity of the aspirant. This would entail a natural indifference to the results of those deeds, which would then not affect the creature at the mental level. This would not only give peace of mind but ensure that the vicious chain of deeds, their results and their consequences, newer deeds done as a spin off from the previous deed and its consequences, and so on and so forth, is broken for good. This liberates the creature from the cycle of birth and death, because basically birth is due to the necessity to undergo punishment or to enjoy the results of the deeds done in the previous life, and death is when the time of this punishment and enjoyment is over. But it is not this easy formula, because during the present life, the creature does newer deeds, and these have their own set of consequences which would necessitate a new birth. So how is this cycle broken or stopped? It is very simple—non-involvement in doing deeds in this life, so that when the past stock is exhausted, and when no new stock is accumulated then there would be no need to take a new birth. But now the question arises—how to remain uninvolved in deeds while one lives in this world with a gross body that cannot remain quiet and has a natural habit of always doing something or the other? The answer is no mental attachment in deeds; the enlightened view that the deed is being done by the body which is not the truthful identity of the person's self, which however is the Atma, the pure conscious self. This very basic understanding relieves the person from the bondage of deeds. The emphasis is on mental non-involvement, and not on actual physical non-performance of deeds, for if one has a body then it is impossible not to do anything at all with the body if one has to lead a normal life in this world. This form of existence is called

‘Jivan Mukti’ which is so much lauded by the scriptures. It is the form of liberation that forms the framework of final liberation and deliverance at the time of discarding of the body at the time of death, when the aspirant achieves the ‘Videha Mukti’ or the liberation and deliverance without the limitations and encumbrance imposed upon the Atma by the physical body.]

Certainty of knowledge (i.e. a knowledge without any doubts and confusions), being firm about its authenticity and veracity, is like a seat on which the patron deity is reverentially seated after it is welcome.

[That is, to have firmness of conviction and steadfastness of beliefs are the foundations upon which the entire edifice of spiritual progress is based. If one has doubts then it creates more restlessness and uncertainties than anything else, and this creates hindrance in spiritual progress. So it is better to first get oneself firmly convinced that what one is doing is the correct path, and then step upon that path spiritedly with whole heartedness, not demurring and doubting about its truthfulness and authenticity midway, for it would leave the aspirant no where to go, and make him like a rudderless ship that has been left adrift to toss aimlessly in the ferocious ocean.]

To remain perpetually in a state of indifference and aloofness, to be constantly dispassionate and detached, is like the symbolic washing and worshipping of the holy feet of the deity.

[This is because remaining detached from this world as well as the body helps the aspirant to cleanse his inner self where the supreme Lord resides as his pure consciousness, or as the Brahm manifested as his Atma, from all the impurities such as the various Vasanas (worldly passions, lusts, yearnings, greed etc.) and Virttis (inherent inclinations, temperaments, habits, tendencies etc.), and other negative traits that are very natural to any creature who has a body and who interacts with the world, such as the qualities of having Ahankar (pride, ego and their attendant arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy), Krodh (anger), Kaam (desires and lusts), Lobha (greed, rapacity), Moha (attachments, attractions, ignorance, delusions) etc. Therefore, this symbolic cleansing of the holy feet of the Lord is done by eliminating all forms of dirt symbolised by worldly attachments and negative traits that are inherent in the creature. This internal cleansing is more significant than external washing of the body.]

Similarly, constant, persistent and consistent non-attachment of the mind with anything is akin to offering oblations to the deity. Remaining always cheerful and in a perpetual state of blissfulness is like bathing the deity.

To see the same Brahm everywhere is like offering of perfume and other scented herbs to the deity.

[This holistic knowledge that the same holy and divine entity prevails everywhere in the creation is like the spread of the refreshing and invigorating scent of divine knowledge which acts as the pleasant perfume that helps to overcome all stench and bad odours represented by the presence of numerous beliefs and faiths, countless cults and paths prescribed for salvation and emancipation, etc. that prevail in this world which is deluded and not certain of its own true self. All these misleading notions are demeaning and degrading for the soul of the aspirant. The diversity of philosophies and spiritual paths only create confusions for the spiritual aspirant instead of showing him a certain way to liberation and deliverance. Each philosophy and school of thought tries to ridicule the other and asserts that it is the best, thereby throwing the follower in whirlpool of doubts and perplexities. On the other hand, the view enumerated in this verse as a whole inculcates the virtues of equanimity and non-duality in the person, and he begins to see the entire world with the eye of equality, compassion and magnanimity because he sees his Lord everywhere in all spheres of life. This spreads the perfume of brotherhood and love in all directions.]

To be able to have this holistic ‘view’ of the deity, to be able to have the ‘vision’ of Brahm as a fount of divine light while meditating, to be able to fix one’s ‘sight’ on the only one and the only truth of creation known as Brahm—this is like the offering of rice grains at the time of worship of the invoked deity.

The realisation of the ‘self’ as the pure consciousness is like the flower that is offered to the deity at the time of worship.

[The flower is like the visible sign of a reward or great respect that is given to anyone as an honour or praise for him for achieving exemplary success in any endeavour. The success here is self realisation of the consciousness. The person thanks the Lord to make it happen by offering him flowers symbolised by his own self.]

To treat this eternal consciousness as the divine sacrificial fire is like the offering of lighted incense sticks (*the clibanum*) to the worshipped deity. To realise that the pure consciousness is like the divine Sun called Aditya (the Sun God) is like the lighted lamp.

[This metaphor is very obvious. The sun lights the entire realm; the consciousness present inside the aspirant also lights up his inner self in a similar manner. The purpose of the lamp is to illuminate the worship altar, and similarly the sun is useful because it gives light to the world. So the realisation that the symbolic light of consciousness is burning in the heart of an aspirant gives him the ‘light’ of wisdom, truthful knowledge and enlightenment that removes the darkness of delusions and ignorance from the realm of his mind and intellect.]

To visualise that one has an uninterrupted access to the pitcher of Amrit, or the elixir of beatitude and felicity stored in the moon, which is a metaphoric way of saying that one has gained access to the perpetual bliss obtained by self-realisation, is like the offering of sweets to the deity at the time of formal worship.

[The simile between the sweet offered to the deity and the Amrit is very obvious once again. The bliss that a Yogi attains during meditation that culminates in Samadhi gives him immense happiness and satisfaction, and since the supreme Brahm, the Lord, resides in his bosom, when he feels happy that Lord also feels satisfied.]

To be steady and unwavering in one’s spiritual path (progress) is akin to doing circumambulation or circumnavigation of the worship altar, the sacrifice place and the deity. The eclectic notion of ‘So-A-Ham’, i.e. ‘that is me’ (or the supreme truth is me), is tantamount to bowing and offering obeisance to the worshipped deity.

[The self realised ascetic will never be haughty and arrogant when he makes this statement which is one the greatest truths propounded by the scriptures. When he says that he is that Supreme Being personified, he is actually only affirming that truth, and not boasting about himself. He is just stating that he has finally realised the truthful form of his own self. After all, the ultimate form of emancipation and salvation is when no distinction remains between the individual creature and the source from where the creature came from, i.e. the merger of the individual Atma of the creature with the supreme Atma of the creation, which is Brahm.]

Silence is like offering of prayers and chanting of hymns.

[This is a very important observance—the Lord is well versed in scriptures and the languages. Loud incantations are not at all needed to please the supreme Lord. He understands the language of the heart and what goes on in the mind even without telling him. Silent prayers are the best forms of prayer and means of communication with the Lord. No one needs to tell him what he already knows. The real prayer comes from the heart and not as words learnt by rote; such words are robbed of their true emotional and spiritual value. It is not possible to cheat the supreme Lord by repeating something written by someone else when we would rather like to say something different to him. If we were to treat the Lord like a mother, then any

mother would better understand the meaning of her child's cry than the words of the scriptures. The same thing applies here. The glory and majesty of the Lord cannot be captured in words; in fact that would be tantamount to showing a lamp to the sun. So those who are wise prefer to keep quiet instead of making a fool out of themselves by repeating words of someone else as prayers because the supreme One who lives in the heart understands the 'words of silence' better than meaningless words which have no pith or substance in them, and which are repeated like a parrot just for the sake of saying.]

Being contented and satisfied, feeling fulfilled, is like giving rest to the deity after concluding the ritual of formal worship and dispersing the congregation that has assembled for such worship.

[This is because when one is fully satisfied he would not seek anything from anyone, even from the Gods. When all desires are annihilated and when a person feels fully contented and fulfilled, he would not go to others for his needs. It is metaphoric way of saying that the assembly has been dispersed and the deity given rest. It is usually observed that people perform elaborate religious ceremonies to propitiate Gods with one or the other wish which they like to be fulfilled. When they don't have any need or unfulfilled desire, they need not perform such elaborate exercises. So the symbolism is very clear here also.]

A person who knows this is really deemed to be knowledgeable about the true meaning of worship (and therefore he becomes one as exalted as the supreme Brahm himself because he would have realised that the deity he is worshipping is silently residing in his own 'self') (5).

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Brahman 2, Section 3

1. In this manner, when the triad of knowledge (based on the triumvirate of the object sought to be known, the process of knowing it, and the person who seeks that knowledge or the one who knows it) is done away with, i.e. when this distinction is removed or dispelled, then that state is achieved which resembles the calm and pacific ocean that has no heaving waves in it, or it is like the lamp burning at a place where there is no wind blowing to disturb the steadiness of its flame. In this exalted and stable state, a person has no feelings, emotions and sentiments of any kind. This state is called the 'Kaivalya', or the unique state of existence which is one of its own kind, and that is self-illuminated and radiant (1).

[Note—The word Kaivalya means the only one. In this state of existence, there is no sense of duality and its attendant confusions and perplexities about Brahm and the creature. The knowledge which enables this realisation to dawn in the intellect of the creature is attained by the study of the scriptures or hearing about it from a wise teacher or by the means of contemplation and meditation etc. But once this fact is ascertained by acquisition of truthful knowledge, then the sense of duality vanishes and the realised person sees the same supreme Brahm prevailing everywhere in the creation in a uniform and universal manner. Then he is not buffeted by numerous theories and speculative conjectures, and he remains steady in his conviction like a flame of the lamp that remains steady in the absence of wind. The comparison with the lamp is important because this awareness of the same Brahm everywhere implies that for such a person who has got this realisation there is light of truthfulness and the illumination created by its glorious radiance shining everywhere, thereby removing the darkness of ignorance and delusions. When darkness is removed, what removes is the brightness of self-realisation. That is why the Kaivalya state is described as having an inherent illumination of realisation in it; it is an inborn and integral glow of

a divine halo and a radiant light which is a metaphor for realisation and truthful knowledge.

Further, this realisation relates to Brahm who is self illuminated and radiant as well as to the fact that that Brahm and the Atma, which is pure enlightened consciousness, are the same entity. Therefore, both the Atma and the Brahm are self-illuminated. Whereas the Atma has a microcosmic form as the one that lives in the individual creature's bosom, it is at the same time prevalent in the entire creation as the conscious factor that drives it, and that consciousness is known as Parmatma or literally the supreme Atma. Both are essentially the same—i.e. they are Kaivalya. A wise person who is established in this belief is also the one of his kind or Kaivalya. For him, nothing else but the Truth prevails, and of course Truth can only be one, or Kaivalya.]

2. A person who remains aware or conscious of his true form and pure nature (as the one who is pure enlightened consciousness personified; as the Atma which is in turn indistinguishable and inseparable from the supreme Brahm) at all times, during his waking as well as the sleeping states of existence (i.e. throughout his life, day and night, whether he is actively involved in doing worldly deeds with his body or he is not doing anything at all, i.e. in every stage and walk of life), is indeed called a 'Brahm Vid', i.e. a person who is well versed in the knowledge pertaining to the essential truth of Brahm; a person who really is truthfully aware of what Brahm is; who is wise and erudite enough to be enlightened about the essential doctrines, the basic tenets, the great maxims and axioms of the scriptures that endeavour to define Brahm in a subtle and succinct manner. [It must be remembered that it is foolhardy to even attempt to define or describe Brahm in its entirety.] (2).

3. Although the mind-intellect complex is relegated to the background and rendered inconsequential because it has no role to play in both the deep sleep state of existence called 'Sushupta' as well as in the trance-like state of consciousness called 'Samadhi', the two stages of Sushupta (deep sleep) and Samadhi (trance-like state) are vastly different from one another though they apparently seem to be alike because of the defunct mind-intellect complex in both the cases.

During the Sushupta state of existence, the mind dissolves in ignorance or is concealed in a veil of ignorance, as a result of which there is no scope of attaining 'Mukti', or liberation and deliverance from the bondage of ignorance (3).

[Note—During the 'deep sleep state of existence of consciousness', which is the third state in which the consciousness exists, the mind becomes defunct and ceases to have any role. That is, a man does not see any dream nor remembers anything happening around him in the outside world while he was lying asleep in a virtual 'un-consciousness' state of existence simply because the mind which perceives such perceptions is not functioning.

The word 'ignorance' refers to (a) the unawareness of the bliss that is obtained at the culmination of Samadhi, and also (b) to the unawareness of what is happening in the physical world of the waking state of consciousness as well as the imaginary world of the dreaming state. In fact, this Sushupta stage can be compared to the proverbial 'lull before the storm'. The creature has two options now—either to step back into the world of dreams and then to the world of wakefulness, or progress further ahead to the next step of Samadhi.

Since the mind is the instrument that receives and stores information from the outside world in its memory, when it ceases to function the man is not able to experience anything about the external world or even dream of anything. Therefore the Atma, which is the truthful identity of the man and the actual authority that feels and experiences anything, remains ignorant of what is happening in the physical

external world while the man sleeps, and at the same time since it is not even dreaming it remains oblivious of what is happening in the imaginary world of dreams that the active mind conjures up during the dreaming state of existence.

Hence, a sleeping man is ignorant of everything—whether that pertains to the world of waking state or the world of dreams. The Atma is at peace with itself; it is freed from the influences of the mind as well as the various entrapments caused by the body and its sense organs. But this freedom is transient and temporary, for as soon as he wakes up, the entire setup snaps back to life and the mind becomes active, thereby enabling the man to witness and experience the happenings of the world, and be affected by them. Thus the man no longer remains free from the fetters that had robbed him of his peace and tranquility. Similarly during dreams, the man is able to witness and experience what is happening in that world of dreams. Though that world is fictional, yet he is very much involved in it and affected by what he sees in his dreams as is evident when he gets frightened by nightmares, or recollects pleasant dreams while he is awake, especially if the physical world in which he lives is not as pleasant as the one he sees in his dreams.

So for all practical purposes, the Atma is peaceful only till the time it sleeps soundly, but this is a temporary phase because as soon as the man wakes up, the awareness of the world with all its problems snatches his Atma's peace and bliss that it had been enjoying earlier during sleep. In short, the man is not permanently freed from the world of worries and sorrows, and is therefore not free and liberated in the true sense of the word. While he is awake, his mind is pulling him towards this world of material comforts and pleasures. When he is dreaming, the mind takes him on a trajectory of fancy in which he can do things that were not possible for him during the waking state. Both the worlds are entangling for him, pulling him in opposite directions, and the freedom from them that he finds during deep sleep or Sushupta is only temporary.]

4. During the Samadhi state of existence, all the faults and flaws categorised as 'Tama' (i.e. the meanest qualities in a man) are exhausted or annihilated. These Tama qualities form a veil around the pure consciousness or Atma in the form of various Vrittis (inherent tendencies and temperaments of the creature that define his character and behavioural pattern in this world). During the state of Samadhi, the conscious Atma becomes a mere witness of what is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in anything. As a result of this, these Vrittis have no effect on the Atma. During this state, the mind is subjugated because it is focused on the pure self instead of in the world and its accompanying trauma. As is well known and is a well established doctrine of the Upanishads that 'the delusory world is a creation of the mind, and is based on the ignorance of the truth or reality', so when the mind is pulled away from the world, which however is its own creation, and instead concentrated elsewhere, in this case in the pure self, then it would not have the scope to create more mischief. As a result, all delusions are eliminated, and stability, accompanied by peace and bliss, become dominant features (4).

[Note--With all delusions and ignorance exhausted, and with their progenitor the mind firmly vanquished, the man is able to attain truthful Mukti. 'Mukti' refers to true liberation of the creature from the bondage of ignorance, and deliverance from its shackling effects. If ignorance persists, then merely annihilation of the mind for a short while, or mere non-functioning of the mind temporarily, does not provide Mukti. In the case of Samadhi, the mind is not functioning even during the waking state, so the liberation from all the delusions created by it is permanent. This is Mukti

In verse no. 3, it has been shown how the state of the mind changes from one state to another. In the state of Samadhi, this does not happen because during this state the man remains perpetually engrossed in the awareness of his 'pure self' and

enjoys the accompanying bliss that comes with self-realisation even during his waking state when he appears to be doing his normal work of the world while he is actually mentally and emotionally aloof, disinterested and detached from them. His mind is not hooked to the world but constantly, consistently and persistently focused on his inner self. As a result, the mind does not respond to stimuli from the external material world, and therefore it does not store any information for the sub-conscious to dream of even during the dreaming state of existence. There is a uniform state of existence marked by bliss, and detachment and non-involvement of the Atma in anything related to the mundane world.

That is why Mukti is possible during the state of Samadhi but not during the state of Sushupta.]

5. Now, since Samadhi creates oneness of the pure consciousness or Atma with the supreme Truth which is the ultimate Reality, or when the individual creature realises the ultimate Truth of the entire existence, the sense of duality is obliterated for good. As a result, even though the aspirant wakes up into this world and appears to be doing his duties in a normal way, the profundity of the ultimate Truth that he has realised—the fact that what is seen is this external world is an illusionary creation of the mind, that the world exists as long as the mind thinks it to be there, and that the essential operating truthful factor in the whole creation is not the gross physical frame of the world as it is seen but the subtle consciousness that is not seen and which is known as the Atma at the micro level and Brahm at the macro level—keeps him virtually indifferent and aloof from this deluding world. Since he has tasted the ambrosia of truthful and eternal bliss while he was in the state of Samadhi, it becomes his main pursuit, for the happiness that this artificial world appears to provide him, the comforts and pleasures that the sense objects give him are all illusive, impermanent and deluding for him; they are artificial, fictitious and transient. He has realised this fact, so he, being wise and erudite as well as enlightened about the actual Truth and aware of the Reality, abhors this falsehood and tries to keep a safe distance from it by not getting involved in it and falling in its trap.

Anyone who has understood the essential doctrines that pertain to Brahm realisation does not fall in the trap of falsehood, and such a person becomes one like Brahm; he becomes as exalted and honourable as Brahm; he becomes indistinguishable and inseparable from Brahm (5).

6. A person whose different ‘Sankalps’ (i.e. various volitions, determinations, ambitions, desires, vows and resolves) have been totally and completely annihilated or exhausted or overcome or eliminated or brought under control, only such a person can have access to ‘Mukti’, or liberation and deliverance (from ignorance, from the various delusions, from this mundane and artificial world of various illusions and entrapments).

Such a sincere seeker of Mukti becomes totally dispassionate and detached from all kinds of things that are trapping by nature, things that are transient, mortal, artificial and deluding, thereby completely renouncing all his mental, intellectual, emotional and sentimental attachments or dealings with them, and instead of them focusing his attention on the supreme Parmatma (as he is the only truthful Authority that is the provider of eternity and bliss as well as liberation and deliverance to the soul of the seeker from the trap into which it finds itself in), he indeed becomes ‘Mukta’ (i.e. such a wise and enlightened person indeed attains liberation and deliverance from all kinds of shackles that tie an ordinary creature who is not wise and enlightened enough) (6).

[Note--An enlightened person who has realised the truth about the eternal source of bliss, who has realised the falsehood of this world and the truthfulness of the Atma and its parent Parmatma is no more attracted to this world of artificiality and delusions. He sees the world as hollow and without any pith and substance. He realises that getting involved in the world of material sense objects is only a source of endless sufferings and sorrows, and they would ensnare him in their clutches from which it is very difficult to tear one self free. This trap creates slavery for the man instead of giving him peace and tranquility. So to break free from this shackle created by ignorance about the reality and truth is equivalent to attaining Mukti, or liberation and deliverance of the soul from delusions and ignorance.]

7. Hence it is repeatedly emphasised that a person can attain the exalted state of being 'Jivan Mukta' (i.e. liberated and delivered from worldly shackles created by delusions and ignorance even while he is alive and interacts with this world) if he avoids getting bogged down, confused and perplexed in the maze created by so many countless aspects of metaphysics and theology—such as what is knowledge and what is the object of that knowledge, what are the various meditative theories and techniques and what are the objects (benefits, rewards) of those meditative practices, in debating what to see or observe or pursue or follow and what not to, what is the truthfulness and fact of what is seen and what is not seen, what is gross and what is subtle, or engaging endlessly in such debates, logics and arguments¹. This is verily the knowledge contained herein, and a person who has this knowledge is indeed regarded as knowledgeable and erudite (7).

[Note--¹That is, it is useless and in vain to waste one's time and energy by allowing one self to be confused and perplexed willingly by getting trapped in the bog of uncertainty and doubts created by such endless debates and discussions concerning various aspects of scriptures and metaphysics. The Truth (Brahm and Atma; pure enlightened consciousness) has to be realised first hand by a person in order to be convinced about its authenticity and irrefutability, and mere debates and discussions about it are not conducive to sufficiently convince him about its veracity so as to make him a staunch follower of that Truth. On the contrary, they would cause more perplexities and confusions about the Truth and how to reach it or realise it than removing them.]

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Brahman 2, Section 4

1. A creature has five states of existence of its consciousness—viz. the waking state called Jagrat, the dreaming state called Swapna, the deep sleep state called Sushupta, the blissful state called Turiya, and the trans Turiya state called Turiyatit marked by the highest order of beatitude and felicity (1).

2. Out of these five planes of a creature's existence, it is in the Jagrat state that a creature gets involved in doing various deeds, and aspires to do such good, righteous and noble deeds that would not only help him to overcome the fear of getting into hell due to the sinful effects of his past deeds but also help him to attain heaven. That is, it is only during the waking state that a man can use his body and its sense organs to do deeds, and these deeds decide whether he would be condemned to hell as a metaphor for his punishment, or destined for heaven where there is perpetual bliss and happiness as a reward for his righteousness and goodness. Therefore, it is only when one has any desire, even a holy and auspicious one such as to achieve heaven by

doing good deeds, that he endeavours to do various deeds in order to accomplish success in fulfilling those desires. Getting ‘involved in doing any deed whatsoever’ that is conducive to the fulfillment of any desire, and which helps the aspirant to achieve success in it, is nevertheless deemed to be getting entangled in the web of deeds and their effects—good effects such as going to heaven, or bad effects such as going to hell (2).

[Note—This verse emphasises the point that deeds are so entrapping by their inherent nature that once a creature puts his leg in this bog, it is bound to be sucked in it; once he allows himself to come in contact with the deeds, they would invariably clasp him in a firm grip. Whether the deeds themselves are auspicious or not, whether the intention of doing them is good or otherwise, but it is impossible for a creature to remain unaffected by the basic nature of the deeds to trap and clasp everyone who comes within their reach in a vice-like grip.]

3. On the other hand, when the same creature accepts the philosophy of renunciation from deeds, he finds freedom from birth which is a result of the affects of deeds and their consequences, and the resultant bondage to this world. When he has this aspiration of finding the ultimate freedom, called Mukti, from all types of shackles pertaining to this body and the world, he would accept the path of renunciation and proceed towards his goal of emancipation and salvation of his self (3).

[Note—When a creature has any kind of hope or expectation, such as the desire to enjoy the comforts and pleasures of heaven, he would do compatible deeds that would help him achieve his goals. The creature can enjoy heaven or suffer in hell only if he has a body and he has the feeling or notion that he is enjoying or suffering. The very desire that ‘I wish to go to heaven’ or that ‘I wish not to go to hell’ necessitates the presence and involvement of a body because no one can enjoy heaven or suffer in hell if he does not have a body for these notions or feelings are limited to the gross body and its various organs. The pure consciousness neither suffers from pain of hell nor exults in the pleasures of heaven.

The true identity of a creature is his Atma and not the physical gross body. Therefore it is the Atma which is deemed to be involved in doing any deed when it is said that the creature is doing anything. So, when the wise and enlightened creatures realises that his true ‘self’ called the Atma is being unnecessarily dragged into the notion of doing deeds whereas in fact it is the body which is actually doing the various deeds, and that the body is not his true identity but merely a vehicle used by his Atma for its journey in this world, a journey that has been imposed upon it as a punishment or reward of its past deeds and their cumulative affects, he withdraws himself, i.e. he distances his Atma from getting involved in any deed. This is because he has known the negative effects of this erroneous conception of the body’s deeds as being treated as the deed done by the creature, and that doing auspicious and good deeds can give him freedom from his agonies—this is the very mistake that the creature had made in his previous life when he had thought that he can attain liberation by doing good deeds. So, the creature gets himself involved in doing deeds. But these deeds are so cunning that they silently and secretly ignite a desire in him to see and enjoy the rewards that accrue with good deeds. Since the body continued to do deeds till its last moment, obviously some remnants of rewards due to the creature remained pending before he died. Therefore he has to take a new birth to give effect to the rewards that were due to him but could not be awarded because of the intervention of death. The net result is that instead of getting freedom from the very cycle of birth and death that he had desired in the first place, the creature remained trapped in it. So a wise man would not like to repeat that mistake again; he would not like to get involved in anything that would push him into another round of birth and death. He would rather not get involved in doing any deed whatsoever, good or bad.

But since he has got a body, he must do something, for the body cannot remain idle by nature. The answer to this perplexing dilemma is to do deeds with total dispassion, detachment, non-involvement and with a sense of renunciation. When there is renunciation, there is no sense of belonging and attachment, no hopes and expectations, and therefore there is no question of accumulation of after affects of deeds simply because the creature does not ‘actually do’ anything. The actions become superficial and they do not involve the mind and the intellect and the heart; only the body is involved. And since the body is not the ‘true self’, there is therefore no question of the ‘true self’ of having to bear the consequences of the deed. This is called the true form of ‘Mukti’ or liberation.

On the other hand, if the creature has any hope or expectation from any deed, or if a deed is done with an expectation of any reward, such as acquiring heaven, then it would not be truthfully liberating; it would rather be entangling for the creature though he might think otherwise in his foolishness. All deeds force the Atma to assume a body because every deed has a result, and acquisition of a body automatically entails a cycle of birth and subsequent death. Obviously, this is not the true meaning of liberation and deliverance.]

4. Now, such a seeker needs guidance to follow the prescribed path. So he takes the shelter (advise, help, guidance and refuge) of a wise and enlightened Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide), and then follows the righteous path determined for his liberation and deliverance as advised by him. This path is the following—he should get rid of all his inherent natural faults such as having Kaam¹ (worldly passions, lust and desires) etc., do his assigned duties and deeds and go about his life in the ethical way sanctioned by the scriptures (i.e. follow a righteous and auspicious code of conduct), inculcate in himself the four noble virtues², and endowed with these great eclectic qualities he should diligently try to concentrate his attention on and then experience the presence of the supreme transcendental authority of the Lord in his own lotus-like heart. With this experience called self-realisation, he goes beyond the third state of existence of the consciousness called Sushupta which is the deep sleep state of consciousness, and witnesses the pure Atma which is none other than that Lord himself personified. That is, he has reached a higher state of existence when he can witness the pure consciousness and self-illuminated Atma, and its blissful, eternal and non-dual form.

This realisation (that his true self is the supreme entity called Atma residing in his bosom) further inspires him to be convinced that ‘I am one and unique, but sometimes ago I had been deluded and misled by a veil of ignorance to forget about my Atma’s truthful, eclectic and divine form. As a result of being under the influence of various Vasanas (worldly passions, desires and aspirations) and being enveloped by them during my waking state, I had erroneously believed that I was the Tejas³ during the dreaming state of consciousness.

In the same manner, when I had got rid of these two states of existence (i.e. the waking and dreaming states) and had entered the third state (of existence called deep seep state or Sushupta), I began to believe that I was Pragya⁴.

But now with the dawn of truthful realisation of the Atma, I am convinced that ‘I am only one’ (and all the forms that I had thought I had were actually not the correct description of my true self). All those different forms in which I had been were due to the different circumstances and states in which my body and its conscious level existed. In essence, I am only one and not changing; there was no other thing but ‘me’ or ‘I’. Once this wisdom and erudition dawns upon a creature, he begins to appreciate the truthfulness of the statement ‘I am the pure and non-dual Brahm’, as a

result of which all notions of duality and differences of perceptions are dispelled for good.

When the enlightened seeker begins to concentrate his attention upon the self-illuminated entity ensconced in his own bosom, he becomes one like it (because one becomes what he thinks about and the company which he keeps). That is, he assumes the divine eclectic form of Brahm (i.e. he becomes enlightened about his own divine self and its truthful form as the Atma which is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified), and moves ahead on the path of Mukti (emancipation and salvation; liberation and deliverance). This realisation makes him mature in his spiritual pursuit. [That is, realisation of the great spiritual truth about one's self makes a man mature in his spiritual pursuits. He would not be misled anymore by any kind of delusions and ignorance.] (4).

[Note—¹The various faults that afflict and torment a creature are the following—

(a) The *four faults* that are related to his temperament and natural inclination and mental bearing—Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions, greed, yearnings and aspirations; Krodh (anger, wrathfulness and vengeance); Lobh (greed, rapacity and hunger for material gains); and Moha (worldly attractions, attachments and infatuations as well as delusions and ignorance).

(b) The *five faults* or shortcomings of the body—According to Brahman 1, section 2, verse nos.1-2, there are following—viz. Kaam (worldly lust, desires, passions and yearnings), Krodh (anger, wrathfulness), Asthma or obstruction of breath, Bhaya (fear of physical harm), and Nidra (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties) (verse no. 1). Their remedy are respectively the following—viz. to be without any desires whatsoever, to be forgiving and tolerant, to eat less and moderately, to be strong, brave and courageous, and to constantly devote time and energy in contemplation and meditating upon the essential nature of things called Tattwa (i.e. to keep the mind from lying idle and instead keep it occupied in introspection and deep thoughts) (verse no. 2).

(c) The *six faults* or shortcomings of the body called 'Urmis' are the problems associated with this gross world that has a physical origin, takes a birth and ultimately ends or dies. Naturally they are not applicable to the supreme Lord who does not take birth and does not die. These so-called 'Vikars' are the following—(1) problems associated with birth, (2) problems associated with growth, (3) problems associated with consequences of deeds done and actions taken by a creature in this world, (4) problems associated with gradual decay and decline of the body and its functions, (5) problems associated with old age and its attendant horrors, and (6) problems associated with the ultimate destruction and end of everything that relates to the creature. One will observe that the life of a creature is a continuous graph of sorrows, sufferings and pains of one or the other kind. It is only when the creature realises the truth of existence and who he really is that he begins to disassociate himself from the body and the world, and thus is able to break free from this seemingly interminable cycle of horrors.

²The *four great and noble virtues* that must be inculcated by spiritual aspirants that help success in their spiritual pursuit are the following—

(a) Vivek—wisdom, erudition, reasoning, discrimination, discretion, intelligence and prudence; (b) Vairagya—renunciation, detachment, dispassion and indifference towards everything and everyone; (c) the so-called six assets which are the following—(i) Sham (having self restraint, control, peace, tranquility, serenity, bliss and stoic-ness as well as

equanimity and remaining unruffled), Dam (tolerance, forbearance, fortitude; (iii) Upriti (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha (endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samadhan (solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha (having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion); and (d) Mumukshu—a sincere desire to attain emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance.

³The subtle body of the creature, consisting of the mind-intellect complex, during his dreaming state of existence is called *Taijas*. The word *Taija* means that is powerful and majestic. Since the mind and intellect has stupendous potential as compared to the gross body of the creature, it is referred to as *Taijas*. Its counterpart at the macro level is called the *Hiranyagarbha*.

⁴Similarly, the causal body of the individual creature is called *Pragya*, meaning enlightened, intelligent, wise and erudite. Since the *Atma* which is pure consciousness residing in the bosom of the creature's causal body possesses all these qualities, it is called *Pragya*.]

5. The *Mana* (the subtle mind and heart complex) which has different 'Sankalps' (i.e. has various volitions, determinations, vows and resolutions that have to be fulfilled) is said to be under a bondage, while freedom from such shackles is called 'Moksha' (i.e. the mind and heart that is free from the fetters created by having various Sankalps is deemed to be liberated) (5).

6. A person who has attained that exalted state of existence of consciousness and possesses glorious qualities (as described in the foregoing verses) is then not at all concerned with what his various organs of perception such as the eye perceive vis-à-vis the external world. He neither is affected by nor does he have even a trace of (literally 'no smell' of) any of the delusions and ignorance that are so characteristic of this external material but artificial world of sense objects. He perceives the whole world through the eye of wisdom and enlightenment, and realises that in this deluding world the only essence that is there which is worth accepting and dealing with is nothing but the consciousness known as the *Atma* or soul; the rest is all fictitious and illusive. Or in other words, the *Atma* is an image of all that is worth lauding, worth admiring and worth accepting in this world; the *Atma* is the essence of what is known as the world (and the rest is all ignorance based delusion and an illusionary creation of the mind). This *Atma* is the pure consciousness residing in the aspirant's own bosom. So with this grand realisation he firmly thinks that 'I am Brahm' (because whatever is there in this creation is nothing but a manifestation of the same transcendental supreme authority known as Brahm that also happens to be his *Atma*, as the *Atma* of the creature is also a part of creation and not outside it). But this statement precludes the existence of the negative notion of 'Ahankar', or the sense of pride and ego that the person is the supreme authority himself, because this statement comes with the supreme realisation of the absolute Truth and in such states of realisation there is no scope of negative notions to have any place.

[This idea that I am such and such, and have such great powers and authority, is a character of worldly people who are under the influence of ignorance about their real form and nature, and are deluded by such notions as I am this and I am that. These stupid ideas do not ever enter the mind of a really intelligent and wise person; he would be rather humble and pious and submissive and modest, and he would be

devoid of all forms of haughtiness and arrogance and hypocrisy that are generated by ignorance and delusions of self-grandeur.]

The eclectic and holistic notion and the firm conviction that ‘all this is Atma’ (and what is not Atma is not real) lends in him a sense of fulfillment and contentedness. Since he has realised that he is that Atma, he feels accomplished and fortunate (6).

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Brahman 2, Section 5.

1. When Yogi (ascetic; spiritual aspirant) attains the supreme state of realisation, when he becomes fully contented and fulfilled, and when he has transcended the fourth state of exalted existence of consciousness called Turiya, he is deemed to have reached the crown or pinnacle of spiritual accomplishments. In this state, he becomes as honourable and adorable, as exalted and holy as the supreme transcendental Brahm himself.

‘He is Brahm’ (i.e. there is no difference between him and the supreme authority of existence)—the people recognise and honour him as such (1).

[Note—This is a very important observation; it shows and proves that Brahm is not some abstract God living in some distant heaven and lording over his subjects in an arbitrary manner. This verse shows that realisation of the Truth and its accompanying virtues can make any person equivalent to Brahm; in fact that person becomes Brahm himself. In other words, Brahm is here amongst us, he resides in our very midst, he is none but all of us in our pristine pure forms, but the only distance that separates a person from being Brahm from a person who is not Brahm is the level of his wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, noble virtues, auspicious qualities, righteous demeanors, higher state of mental and intellectual evolvment, and the state of his realisation of the Truth besides the level to which he has been able to overcome his negativity, delusions and ignorance.]

2. Such a person becomes an object of adoration and honour, of reverence and praise for the whole world; he attains an iconic stature, is lauded for his exalted state of mind and intellect as well as for his superior knowledge of the Truth. He acquires freedom to move unhindered and fearlessly in the whole world (i.e. all places are accessible to him; he is welcomed everywhere; and no place can influence his mental convictions and beliefs, making him doubtful and perplexed).

He symbolically establishes his atomic (microcosmic) soul or individual Atma in the vast (macrocosmic) Soul or the universal and supreme Atma of creation called the Parmatma, thereby losing his own independent identity and becoming inconsequential in the process just like the case of a dot in the sky being so minute against the background of the vastness of the sky that the dot is just not visible at all as it merges and gets lost in the fathomless infinity of the sky, virtually becoming an integral part of and inseparable from the latter.

Having lost his worldly individuality and having established himself in the supreme Brahm, he acquires all the virtues that are associated with Brahm—i.e. he becomes immaculate, uncorrupt and pure; he becomes non-dual and one; he is devoid of any grossness, crassness, dumbness, stupidity, delusions and ignorance; he becomes humble, simple-hearted and devoid of any deceit and pretensions; and he loses all interests in mundane affairs of this world and therefore appears to be aloof, disinterested and detached from all non-spiritual affairs of this entrapping, artificial

and deluding world. This eclectic state of his existence is called ‘Yog-nidra’ or a state of virtual sleep during meditation when the practitioner experiences the peace and bliss that comes during sleep when all worldly worries and torments stop to disturb the mind’s peace, and this gives immense bliss to the person who remains in a state of beatitude and felicity as long as he is in that state, oblivious of his worldly surroundings and his mundane circumstances. For a truly realised person, this state is not limited to a fixed period of time, but it becomes perpetual and everlasting, as a result of which the experience of beatitude and felicity too becomes perpetual and everlasting.

Following this magnificent and unmatched path of obtaining bliss, peace and tranquility, he becomes Jivan Mukta, i.e. he finds freedom from the tormenting snares of this world even though he lives in it with a body and goes about his normal duties as ordained for him¹ (2).

[Note--¹This is made possible because of the fact that he never indulges in any thing pertaining to this world—he has no desires, no aspirations, no hopes, no attachments and no hatreds, no unfulfilled tasks and no exaltation about what is accomplished, etc. In short, he remains totally detached from the world and its affairs, and therefore he is freed from its worries. Being under bondage gives miseries and torments to a man, it robs him of his peace of mind and rest of heart, but to be free from all fetters of serfdom is the greatest boon that this life can provide a man with. So this person is Mukta (free, liberated and emancipated) even though he lives in this world surrounded by all the unavoidable characteristic problems associated with worldly life. His Atma, which is his true identity, remains aloof from the world, and the ascetic virtually lives in a perpetual sleep-like state of total peace and tranquility even though he lives in this world with a gross body, for he has reached that exalted state of existence where the body simply becomes inconsequential. He is virtually in a perpetual state of sleep, because when a man is sound asleep, the body matters not to him.]

3. Those persons who remain perpetually submerged in that fathomless ocean of bliss and tranquility (that comes with self-realisation and when the aspirant has reached the trans-Turiya state of exalted existence as described in verse no. 1) are called accomplished Yogis or realised ascetics (3).

4. Compared to such Yogis, even the Gods such as Indra (the king of Gods) and all other Gods get only a fraction of the happiness and joy, the bliss and felicity, the sense of contentedness and fulfillment that is available to them. Such Yogis who have accessed the supreme form of beatitude and felicity that is not even available to the Gods are indeed great and fortunate. He is called a ‘Param Yogi’, or the supreme Yogi or the most exalted amongst other Yogis. This is the mysterious secret unraveled by this Upanishad; this is the eclectic divine knowledge revealed by it (4).

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Brahman 3, Section 1

1. The great sage Yagyavalkya asked the exalted Mandal Purush (the divine supreme Lord present as the splendorous Sun)—‘Oh Lord! You had preached me about the state of mind called ‘Amanask’¹, i.e. the state in which the mind remains totally detached and uninterested in the surrounding world and its sense objects, and

consequentially obtains peace, tranquility and serenity. [See Brahman 2, Section 2, verse no. 4.] I have forgotten about it, I request you to tell me about it once again' (1).

[Note—¹The word *Amanask* literally means without the influence or interference of the mind; being de-linked from the mind; annihilation of the mind; absence of the mind. This state leads to tranquility and peace for the creature and his soul. The Atma, which is truthful 'self' of the creature, generally interacts with the outside world through the mind-intellect complex. When the mind is snapped shut, the chain of receptions and responses of the Atma vis-à-vis the world also gets snapped. The Atma then remains cocooned in the sheath called the bliss sheath which surrounds it in the causal body. It is not impinged upon by the perplexing impetuses from the outside world because the circuit has been broken at the level of the mind. Hence, the Amanask state is when the Atma of the creature, i.e. the pure consciousness, becomes detached from and remains oblivious of the deluding external world along with its trademark problems, and consequential becomes rested, peaceful and tranquil. The Atma is uninvolved and aloof from all that the body might be doing in this world if the creature remains permanently in this Amanask state, because it is the mind and not the body that actually does the 'thinking, feeling, remembering, analyzing, deciding and responding' to the stimuli that the body receives from the external world on behalf of the creature. If the mind is stopped from functioning, then the body may be doing anything but the creature does not register that deed, and therefore the Atma is also not aware of what the body was doing and neither is it responsible for its consequences as it is not a participant in the entire process. That is why this state of Amanask is liberating for the creature's Atma. It also follows that the mind-intellect complex is the one that decides whether or not the creature gets involved in a deed.]

2. That divine and exalted Purush replied, 'Alright, so be it. That state of Amanask is most mysterious, magnificently divine and highly eclectic, and by its knowledge and diligent practice an aspirant can become satisfied, fulfilled, grateful and successful in accomplishing his spiritual aim. As a reward of this state, he remains constantly in the Shambhavi Mudra (2).

[Note--That is, when he has reached the mental plane when he can remain detached from and dispassionate towards this material world on a perpetual basis, he is deemed to be constantly in a meditative posture known as Shambhavi Mudra; he is able to coordinate the functioning of his body and his mind so that the benefits derived from doing this form of meditative exercise are easily available to him. This Mudra has been described in Brahman 2, Section 1, verse no. 5 above.]

3. A wise person who has an eclectic and holistic view of the Divinity, who views this world with the eyes of spiritualism and wisdom, sees that supreme transcendental entity which is the ultimate Truth and Reality of all that exists, and which is only one and non-dual, as Brahm. As a result of this perspective, his existential vision changes.

He sees the same Lord everywhere, having countless names and as many attributes and qualities. The Lord is known as the Ishwar (the supreme Lord of creation; the sum total of all the macrocosmic causal bodies of this creation); is Apramaye (having the following attributes or qualities—boundless, limitless, endless, measureless and without any parameters); is Aj (one who has no beginning, one who is unborn); is Shiva (auspicious, truthful, wise, enlightened and renunciate; the patron God of ascetic); is the Param Akash (one who has the highest degree of qualities possessed by the sky—such as being vast, measureless, fathomless, eternal, infinite, without a beginning and end, pure and uncorrupt and incorruptible; one that is all-pervading and all-encompassing like the sky; one in whose bowl the entire creation has been conceived, is born, is nourished and in which it finally perishes); is Niralamb

(one who neither has nor needs any support or prop for its existence or being); is Advitiya (one who is unique, non-dual, one and only one, matchless and without a parallel); is Brahma (the creator of the visible world; the creator of knowledge symbolised by the Vedas); is Vishnu (the sustainer and caretaker of the creation; the Viraat Purush); and is Rudra (one of the forms of Shiva responsible for conclusion of creation; famous as anger personified) etc.

In other words, a man—who is enlightened enough to see that the essential operational factor present in all these entities is none else but Brahm who is also the essential factor of the conscious Atma present in the cave-like heart of the creature—becomes firmly established in his Atma. With this eclectic awareness and holistic knowledge of who or what Brahm is, he becomes free from all types of doubts and perplexities caused by so many theories and doctrines. This also creates a sense of detachment from and disillusionment with all things which are not real and deluding instead, and which are created by ignorance of the reality. So such a wise, enlightened and self-realised man transcends all worldly notions and emotions, and instead experiences the state of the mind called 'Unmani'¹, i.e. he lives with no interest in any thing that is not the truth, he remains aloof and in constant state of detachment from everything, and instead remains focused on the Atma of which he is convinced as being the only spiritual Truth. For all practical purposes as far as the world is concerned, he is aloof and detached like a man disillusioned with its charms, but this happens because he is charmed by something more enduring and eternal! [See also Brahman 2, Section 2, verse no.4.]

When all the sense organs of the body have ceased to matter (i.e. when all the different organs cease to perceive and react to those perceptions), that person begins to drift in an ocean of utter bliss of Brahm realisation. He becomes unwaveringly calm, serene and tranquil, steady in his state which is devoid of any restlessness, agitations, perplexities, consternations and general state of flux of the mind for which it is so notorious. This meditative practice makes him as steady and unwavering as the flame of lamp which has been placed at a place where there is no wind blowing, where there is absolute stillness of air. This helps him to attain that Brahm who is himself steady, unwavering, still, constant, uniform and unchanging (3).

[Note—¹Refer also to Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 17-17 ½ .]

4. Like a dried up tree, or a person who has fainted or is sleeping soundly when he lies still like a log of wood or an unconscious body, not even aware of his breath and the existence of the body itself, such a spiritually accomplished person as described in aforesaid verses also becomes immune to all restlessness and agitations caused by worldly miseries, sorrows and pains, as well as by the excitements and exultations created by the various gratifications, pleasures and comforts proffered by this material world of sense objects. A man who has achieved this exalted state of existence has achieved the state where there is great peace, tranquility, serenity and bliss. This prevents his Mana (mind) from being extrovert and expansionist (i.e. the mind remains satisfied with what it has instead of trying to grasp at everything on which it can lay its hand on like a hungry rapacious dog eyeing every morsel of food at every doorstep, and barking madly if any attempt is made to shoo it away, or if another dog tries to snatch what it thinks rightly belongs to it). A calm mind finds rest and peace by plunging and submerging itself in the ocean of bliss represented by the awareness of the all-pervasive existence of the fount of eternal peace and happiness, the fount of

beatitude and felicity which is known as the universal Consciousness of creation. This Consciousness is known as Parmatma, or the supreme universal Soul of creation (4).

5. Even as no milk remains in the cow's udder after the cow has been milked, when all the organs of the body are rendered ineffective or conquered and made redundant by practice of Yoga, the mind also gets annihilated automatically.

[This is because the mind depends upon the organs to receive its inputs—as the various perceptions, such as different pleasant and unpleasant sights, smells, sounds, tastes and touch or feelings, and as the sense of enjoyments or sufferings received from the various organs of action. When these organs cease to have any relevance for the aspirant ascetic, the mind would automatically cease to be relevant because the mind is needed by him to monitor these organs and their functioning, to receive their inputs and analyse them, and then react accordingly. So in effect, the mind is also made redundant with the redundancy of the organs.]

This is defined as the state of being 'Amanask' (as mentioned in verse no. 1-4 above) (5).

6. When the aspirant is initiated into the path of Brahm realisation through the great saying (truth) 'Tattwa-masi', and after he has realised the truthfulness of this saying through the process outlined above in these verses, he becomes firmly convinced of the fact that 'I am indeed the eternal and infinite, pure and uncorrupt Parmatmam or the supreme Soul of creation personified'. With this realisation, all distinctions are eroded; he becomes convinced of and firmly believes in the veracity of the fact that 'you are I' and 'I am you', i.e. there is no difference between you and me.

[This is because the same Atma resides in all the creatures as their essential consciousness, life and identity, and this Atma is a miniature personification of the supreme Atma of the entire creation. Since the basic factor, the underlying principle is the same in all the myriad forms in which this vast existence exists, the essential and unique identity and individuality of all the creatures is the one and the same; there is no duality and dichotomy. Since the creation is a varied manifestation of the same Brahm, it follows that the spiritual aspirant or the ascetic who has become convinced of the truth of the saying 'Tattva Masi' becomes himself a personification of Brahm as much as the other person standing in front of him. This is the great non-dual principal of Vedanta.]

This path which has no confusions and doubts leads to uninterrupted peace and bliss. When a spiritual aspirant finds this path, he feels fortunate and blessed, he feels accomplished and fulfilled, he gets the satisfaction of success that one gets in any noble and auspicious endeavour (6).

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Brahman 3, Section 2

1. A person whose mind and heart (i.e. the subtle Mana) has been completely submerged in the 'Parakash',¹ (i.e. whose Mana becomes inseparable and indistinguishable from the supreme transcendental Truth that is as fathomless, vast, infinite, eternal and measureless as the space of the bottomless cosmos), who has attained the state of mind called 'Unmani',² (i.e. has become disinterested in the delusions and diversions created by this illusionary world of sense objects that trap a creature in its snare of deeds and their consequences), and has therefore freed himself from the clutches of his sense organs (i.e. has withdrawn from being engrossed in gratification of the sense organs and fulfillment of their natural instincts and urges, for

whom the world perceived by the various sense organs of perception and the world in which he interacts with his organs of action ceases to matter or have an existence)—for such a person, the fruit of all the good, auspicious and righteous deeds done by him in his previous lives and their accumulated auspicious results are deemed to have matured in the form of attainment of the most exalted and sought-after state of existence called ‘Kaivalya’³ (which is state of no confusions, doubts, consternations, perplexities and dilemmas about the truthful form of liberation and deliverance; it is literally the only one state where there is no question of seeking any other better form of liberation and deliverance from the fetters that tie a creature to this endless cycle of deeds and the compulsion of having to suffer from the consequences of those deeds, leading the creature to remain perpetually fallen in the trap of birth and death, for it is only when he disassociates himself at the mental plane from the deeds done by his body that he is able to break this seemingly interminable chain).

This state of Kaivalya bestows upon him eternal, steady and wholesome bliss and contentedness as well as a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment which marks an end to all sorts of sufferings, pains and torments from which he has been suffering over a long period of time in numerous lives. These sufferings symbolise the different sins that he had committed over that period and the consequences of which he had to endure even much against his will. So this state of Kaivalya acts as the panacea for all his spiritual ailments.

With the removal of all duplicity and confusions, he remains firmly convinced about the greatness of his ‘true self’, the pure conscious and enlightened Atma established in his own heart, and basks in the glory of the great truth about the self, which is the realisation ‘I am Brahm’⁴.

[This is because when a self-realised person has arrived at the ultimate truth about the non-duality of creation, all spiritual confusions are dispelled and doubts are erased. He understands that the essential consciousness present inside his bosom is the actual thing, and the rest of the visible world, including his own body that lives in the world and interacts with it, is gross and inane. This consciousness is the essence of life, and not anything that is not-essential. This is easy to understand because any ‘truth’ can be only one and not two; if anything is essential, it cannot be non-essential simultaneously. In the spiritual and metaphysical field, this truth is the Atma of the individual creature and its counterpart is the Brahm which is the consciousness of the entire creation. The realisation of this ‘truth’ helps him to conclude that he is none other than Brahm in a miniature form.]

This realisation inculcates in him a sense of fulfillment, a sense of having successfully accomplished the aim of all his spiritual pursuits over numerous lives for attaining permanent peace and rest for his self, i.e. for his soul or Atma because the ‘self’ here refers to the Atma and not the body. Once he attains this peace through the path as described in this Upanishad (as well as others), he feels fully contented and satisfied with himself, with nothing more to seek and aim for (1).

[Note—¹Parakash—see also Brahman 1, Section 2, verse no. 13 and its note.

²Unmani— see also Brahman 2, Section 2, verse no. 4, and Brahman 3, Section 1, verse no. 3.

³Kaivalya—see also Brahman 2, Section 3, verse no. 1.

⁴I am Brahm—see also Brahman 3, Section 1, verse no. 5, and Brahman 2, Section 4, verse no. 6.]

2. ‘The supreme transcendental Parmatma and the Atma of the individual is the same’—a wise and self-realised teacher who is teaching this principle to his disciple must also be a firm believer of what he is teaching or preaching. Therefore, the

Purush present in the ‘Aditya Mandal’ (here referring to the divine Spirit who was preaching Yagyavalkya in the form of the Purush present in the splendid disc of the Sun) embraced sage Yagyavalkya as he proclaimed—‘You are me’!

[This statement is the other way of saying ‘I am Brahm’ or ‘I am you’ with the only difference that here the Supreme Being is addressing the individual creature with this truthful statement instead of the other way round. This verse indicates that the glory of the Lord descended from heaven in the form of a splendid and radiant halo of light and enveloped sage Yagyavalkya as he stood in a meditative posture in rapt attention, listening to the disembodied voice of Brahm preaching him the tenets of this revealed Upanishad. This divine shaft of spiritual energy virtually came and rested upon the sage, zapping him so that for a moment he must have felt as if he was struck by some high-voltage eclectic discharge from heaven. The result was that now sage Yagyavalkya himself acquired that high-powered divine and mystical energy as well as was charged by the ‘spirit of the Purush’ who had descended from heaven and symbolically entered Yagyavalkya just like a discharge of lightening that streaks down from the clouds and vanishes in the earth below.]

This is how the teacher or the Guru (who was the Purush or the divine Spirit or the supreme transcendental Lord in a personified form, or the disembodied voice from the heavens personified, or even the inner voice of sub-consciousness speaking aloud) had taught this great knowledge to his disciple (Yagyavalkya) by embracing him (i.e. by welcoming him and accepting him as his disciple, and showing him the greatest of respect; by showing him that what is being preached is indeed meant by the preacher because a man embraces those whom he treats as his equal) (2).

[Note—By embracing Yagyavalkya, the Mandal Purush wished to emphasise the fact that he has warmly accepted the sage not only as his disciple but also has his equal. Both the Mandal Purush and Yagyavalkya appeared to be united and surrounded by a common halo of divine brightness that engulfed them like the halo of the flame around the wick of a candle. Further, this indicates that the Supreme Being blessed Yagyavalkya with a great and rare honour by embracing him personally.]

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Brahman 4, Section 1.

1. After that, sage Yagyavalkya asked the divine Purush or the Lord present in the splendid halo around the sun, ‘Please tell me about the characteristic features of the ‘Vyom-Panchak’, or the five forms of subtle skies’. [See also Brahman 1, Section 2, verse nos. 11-13 in this context.] (1).

2. That Purush replied that the sky has five subtle forms or categories—viz. Akash, Parakash, Mahakash, Suryakash and Paramakash (2).

3. ‘Akash’ (the Firmament) is that sky or space which is completely dark from within and without (because it is the space just above the surface of the earth and has no light of its own). ‘Parakash’ is that sky or space which is like the fire of death at the time of dooms-day, or like the fire of hell. ‘Mahakash’ is that sky element which is full of immeasurable radiance and splendour from within and without (and is therefore has the opposite characteristic as that of the Akash). ‘Suryakash’ is that sky or space that resembles the dazzle and splendour of the sun (because it is in the vicinity of the latter). Finally, the ‘Paramakash’ is that sky which is indescribably bright, all

pervading and all encompassing, and is an abode of immense bliss, joy and happiness (because it is the subtle sky where the supreme transcendental Brahm, who possesses all these characteristics displayed by this sky, is present) (3).

4. A person is definitely affected by the object which is the target of his attention and mental focus (4).

[Note—This is because he constantly, consistently and persistently thinks about this ideal, his goal, and this thinking affects him at his sub-conscious and psychological level. So he acquires certain traits that are inherently possessed by his object of adoration. He would begin to see the world with a vision that is conditioned by the way his sub-conscious and psychology has been affected by constant thoughts of the object that he adores and worships. There is a lot of symbolism here.

For example, if he has a narrow-minded view and limited knowledge of spiritualism and metaphysics, and perceives the creation as limited to the gross mortal creation upon this earth, then the sky just above the earth, called the 'Akash', becomes his horizon and he cannot see beyond it, remaining submerged in something that is dark, and would therefore remain enveloped in the veil of darkness of ignorance.

If he perceives the sky as a place where the hell is located, i.e. if his understanding of the sky element is limited by the view that the sky is symbolised by the 'Parakash' which is nothing but hell where people go after death to suffer for their deeds, then he remains submerged in sorrows, sufferings, pains and miseries for the entire length of his life.

On the contrary, if he is wise and sees the sky as one of the five elements of creation, i.e. as the 'Mahakash', then he becomes as majestic, pure, glorious and radiant as the sky element. That is, he shines in his wisdom and erudition, his sagacity and enlightenment.

If his ideal is the sky which has the qualities of the sun, i.e. the Suryakash, then also he shines like the sun, giving light to others by his wisdom and erudition, by his knowledge and sane advice, showing them the righteous and auspicious path to liberation and deliverance just like the sun lights up the world by its light and shows the path to everyone who wish to go somewhere. Besides this, he remains alert and active as a man is during the day time, as opposed to the night hours when he is supposed to sleep.

Finally, if he worships the sky as the 'Paramakash', i.e. as the sky which is radiant from the radiance effusing from the supreme Brahm residing in it, then he is sure to become one like that Brahm himself. He too would become eternal and glorious as Brahm, he too would have a vast vision and develop a holistic view of this creation, and he too would be endowed with such qualities as equanimity, fortitude, magnanimity etc. that are the hallmarks of someone who is really holy, pious and divine.]

5. Those Yogis (ascetics) who do not have a complete, holistic and comprehensive knowledge of the following—(a) Navchakras¹ (the nine subtle energy centers in the body), (b) Shadadhars² (the six seats or bases in the body), (c) Trilakshaya (the three perceptions of the world—as gross, as subtle and as causal; it also refers to the vision of wisdom acquired when the so-called 'third eye', located at the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose, is activated), and (d) Vyom-Panchak (the five skies described above as well as in 1/2/13)—are Yogis (ascetics who employ meditative techniques for attaining spiritual prowess and success in obtaining liberation and deliverance from the fetters that tie them down to this mundane deluding world) only in name, i.e. they pass off as an ascetic just because of their external appearance, but they are only imposters; they do not have real knowledge of

what the fundamental aspects of Yoga are. [That is, it is imperative for an ascetic to have a thorough knowledge of these fundamental principles of Yoga in order to qualify for being truly called a real and attained Yogi.] (5)

[Note—¹The *Navchakras* are the following—Vyom Chakra located in the top of the head, Bhru Chakra located in the middle of the eyebrows, Anahat Chakra located in the heart region, Swadhisthan Chakra located in the region of the groin, Mooladhar Chakra located in the region of the anus, Nabhi Chakra located in the middle of the navel, Kantha Chakra located in the throat region, Taluka Chakra located in the base of the tongue, and Brahm Randhra Chakra located in the skull at its top as a hair like slit.

²The *Shadadhars* are the following—Muladhar, Udriyan or Swadishtan, Agni Kund, Manipur, Rajdant or Ghantika, Jalandhar or Kapal. These have also been depicted with the aid of a sketch as mentioned above.]

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Brahman 5, Section 1

1. A Mana (the subtle mind and heart complex) that is engrossed in pursuing any or all of the objects of the world that are the subject matter of the mind is deemed to be the one that shackles a creature, while the Mana that has no objects to pursue (i.e. that is free from any desires to be fulfilled and goals to be accomplished) is the medium of obtaining liberation and deliverance from all sorts shackles that tie a creature to this mundane, deluding and entrapping world (1).

[Note—When a man's mind is free from pursuing any materialistic objects in this world, when he does not want anything from anyone, when he does not have any kind of expectation of any honour and praise, any benefit and reward of any kind whatsoever, he would not have to compromise his integrity and dignity in order to please anyone, and he would be contented with himself and do what his conscious tells him is right, noble and virtuous. All spiritual bondages arise because of the mind getting involved in the deluding effects created by its interaction with the world. Once this interaction is disrupted, once the mind does not allow itself to get involved with any sense objects of this materialistic world, it would naturally find time to divert its energy towards other nobler activities, such as spiritual pursuit. This world of delusions and ignorance is a formidable obstacle in spiritual pursuit, and the restless mind has a tendency to get attracted towards things that appear charming and alluring; it finds great comfort and pleasure in the world of material objects, which are nevertheless perishable and transient. The mind is like a honeybee, going from one flower to another in search of nectar. The mind jumps from one object to another, and never finds rest or feels contented. Like the honeybee, it has a whole lot of work to do, never realising that all its efforts would only tie down the creature in a cycle of birth and death much like the bee going to and fro endlessly between the flower and the honeycomb.

Since the mind is like the minister of the sovereign known as the pure conscious Atma residing in the bosom of the creature, if the mind is corrupted by being influenced by this already corrupted world, its advice given to the Atma would also be tinged by distorted versions of the truth, the 'truth' which is, in its pristine and uncorrupted form, eternal and imperishable, and not transient and perishable like the world of material objects. This wrong influence of the mind would lead the Atma to become tarnished by delusions and faults for which it is not responsible because it was the deluded mind that gave a distorted, biased and misconceived advice to the Atma. Thus, when the mind is free from any tainting effects of the world, it would act as a wise minister who can liberate his king from any kind of trouble that the latter

finds himself in; the wise mind can deliver a creature's soul from the trap of this mortal world and provide it with eternity. On the other hand, a deluded mind can pull the creature's soul down and keep it mired in delusions and ignorance.

The heart is part of the entire game plan because the Atma is a resident of lotus-like heart; there are many Upanishads that say this. Whereas the mind controls the thinking process, the heart controls the emotional aspect of a creature's behaviour and general outlook. They work in tandem to decide a particular individual's personality traits, his character and qualities. The process of perceiving the world is actually done by the brain or the mind through the organs of perception, but once the information reaches the heart it gets immediately hooked to things that appeal to it. It then forces the mind to remain attached to that object which seems attractive and charming so that a continuous inflow of pleasant inputs is received. In a similar vein, if the heart does not find anything appealing, it would prod the mind to go somewhere else. Similarly, the mind can also prod the heart to control its impulses if the object seems to be harmful to the creature by the mind's intellectual faculty. So when we say the Mana has to be disassociated from everything that forms the object of its attention, we mean both the heart and the mind. Therefore, both must be properly reined in for spiritual liberation and deliverance of the creature. The heart and mind are like the two horses of a chariot, both requiring equal attention and control, because otherwise the passenger, the Atma, would be thrown off the rocking chariot.]

2. The whole world is perceived by the 'Chitta', i.e. by the mind and the intellect. So, if the mind-intellect loses its attachments with this world, if it does not give shelter to any thoughts of the world, the 'Mana', i.e. the mind and heart complex, also becomes detached and disassociated from them. This state of the Mana is known as 'Unmani' state of existence wherein the Mana has no interest in anything; it remains in an indifferent and detached state of existence; it has got nothing to do with this world.

This maturity in spiritual path makes it possible for the creature to lose its sense of dependence upon the Chitta and the Mana in order to live in and interact with this world. In other words, the creature who has been totally disinterested in the world by the virtue of overcoming its Chitta and Mana becomes eligible to dissolve its independent existence in this world and prepare for its merger with its primary source where it would get eternity and universality (2).

3. The entity that can start and bring to fruition this process of control and annihilation or dissolution of the mind, i.e. the entity that inspires the mind to get detached from the external world as well as from the sense organs of perception and action that are part of the gross body and responsible for the creature's interaction with the physical world, is the entity which is known as 'I' or 'Me'. It is the 'I' that can do it; it is the 'I' who will benefit from it; it is the 'I' that is the cause of this entire world created by my imaginative mind, and it is 'I' who can bring an end to this chain of events (3).

[Note--That is, the wise man must realise that it is he himself who is responsible for his liberation and deliverance, and it is he himself who is responsible for his remaining tied in shackles. No one else is to be blamed for both these circumstances. Here the word 'I' is not egoistic or a show of haughtiness, but the dawning of realisation that a man is responsible for his own emancipation and salvation on the one hand, and for falling in the trap of worldly delusions on the other hand.]

4. The unspoken word (that is present as the cosmic eternal vibrations in the ether which has been conceptualised as the word OM representing Brahm) has a sound in it (which is the energy of the ethereal sound waves produced in the cosmos and is

referred to as the Naad). This sound has energy manifested as light in it, and within this light is the entity called Mana (4).

[Note—According to the philosophy of Vedanta, this whole creation is submerged in a sea of cosmic sound known as Naad. This sound generated energy because it moved in waves as any sound is known to move, and this movement of waves in the cosmic ether generated energy. This energy powered the process of creation. One of the forms of energy is light, and light is a metaphor for and synonymous with such grand virtues as erudition, knowledge and enlightenment. Since the world's existence is discernible by the creature because of the ability of the mind to first conceive or conceptualize it in its present shape and then perceive its details and act according to those perceptions, if the creature is able to subjugate the mind, if it is able to eliminate it altogether, then the external world would automatically vanish from the spiritual horizon. This is liberation of the creature from delusions and its attendant ignorance of the truth.

Further, the supreme transcendental Brahm is called 'Shabda Brahm' or the Brahm who is known by a 'word'. It is obvious because no one has seen Brahm, and the only way to ascertain Brahm's existence is to hear about Brahm through the words of the scriptures, and through the spoken word of the teacher who explains the great tenets of those scriptures. Brahm is also known as 'Akshar' which literally means a letter as well as something that is not perishable, that which is eternal. Letters form a word. So the logical corollary is that when we talk about something that possesses certain characteristics that are very unique, such as being eternal and imperishable, we have to use some 'word' to identify it and describe it to the best of our ability, and that is the reason why the supreme transcendental Authority and the ultimate Truth of creation known as Brahm is also called a 'Shabda' or a word. And since any word consists of letters which are called 'Akshar', literally meaning something which is imperishable, it fits the bill perfectly.]

5. The mind is the incubator where the entire world (creation) is conceived; it is the progenitor and the cause of all the three worlds (the past, the present and future; the celestial, the terrestrial and the subterranean; the heaven, the hell and the temporal; the gross, the subtle and the causal), along with their sustenance, development and annihilation or conclusion. That is, this entire creation, the whole visible world, is there because the mind sees and thinks it to be there, because the mind thinks it is relevant and important, because the mind finds pleasure and comfort there. In other words, the world is a creation of the mind, and it derives its importance and significance because of the mind. Should the mind decide that it no longer needs any of the worlds, the latter would simply cease to exist or have any relevance for the creature.

When the mind decides to cease its extrovert activities, it plunges and dissolves into a state of existence known as the exalted abode of Lord Vishnu. That is, when the mind dissociates itself from the external world of delusions and artificiality which is its own imaginative creation, then not only would this world vanish but the mind would find its self in a state which is calm and quiet and full of bliss and happiness. In this new state, none of the confusions and fears arising out of the world of perishable material objects, delusions and ignorance prevails, as a result of which it resembles the exalted and eternally peaceful, blissful and imperishable abode of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord whose mere presence dispels all negativity. [Vishnu is another name for the Viraat Purush who is the cosmic all pervading and all encompassing personification of Brahm. It is from this Viraat Purush that the known creation has evolved.] (5).

6. When the Mana (mind) fixes its attention on something that gives it eternal peace and bliss, which is equivalent to being in the abode of Lord Vishnu (verse no. 5), it tends (prefers) to remain there permanently and gradually becomes indistinguishable and inseparable from it. [In other words, once the Mana withdraws itself from the rocky world that is so transient and uncertain, and instead fixes itself in pure consciousness which is steady and unfaltering as well as the only eternal spiritual truth, it finds permanent tranquility and peace. After all, the reason for it getting involved in the world in the first place was for search of happiness and peace, but in the bargain what it got was something that was not only temporary but also entrapping and deluding. What more would the Mana want if it can find something that can give it eternal peace and happiness, something that can bestow everlasting tranquility and bliss to it? By remaining submerged in the thoughts of the consciousness which is the ultimate essence and spiritual truth in creation, and hence called the 'Param Tattva', the mind gets peace, tranquility, happiness, bliss and contentedness that are steady, imperishable, infinite and eternal. So once the Mana finds permanent peace and bliss, it would naturally stick to this state of existence; it would obviously not like to go back to the world where everything is transient and illusive; it would not like to bargain eternity with transience. Once it chooses to remain permanently in the company of pure consciousness, it would be a de-facto permanent resident of this place and acquire a new identity, new habits and characteristics which are in sync with its new habitat that would distinguish it from its earlier identity as the mind tainted by worldly delusions and ignorance. It would have assumed a completely new personality that would be different from the one it had while residing or remaining engrossed in the world. It would be called a mind that is inseparable and indistinguishable from the abode of Lord Vishnu—a metaphoric way of saying that the mind had found the ultimate objective of its quest for happiness and peace.]

The steady and unfaltering state of existence of the mind brings it in direct contact with the grand truth of existence—the truth that is non-dual or Advaitya, the truth which has no second, no equal or no parallel. This non-dual state implies that there is only one truthful entity in existence, that there is only one consciousness, and that there is only one supreme Lord. It removes all dichotomy, all notions of duality and fractured view of creation. This supreme and exalted state of mental existence where there is no transience and no more confusion about what is true and what is not, the state of existence marked by profound mental stability and quietude is known as the 'Param Pada'.

The eclectic realisation of the existence of the pure consciousness as one's 'true self', to be firm and steady in this conviction is tantamount to having achieved the exalted stature of Param Pada. This is the supreme state of existence; it is the highest citadel of spiritual achievement that an aspirant can aspire for. [And this citadel is akin to reaching or having access to the abode of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord.] (6)

[Note--The world is sometimes pleasant and at other times it appears to be tormenting. Any one given thing is pleasant for one and unpleasant for another. There is the day and the night; there is sorrow and joy; there is birth and death; there is health and sickness; there is ignorance and wisdom; there are many sanctioned paths to attain emancipation and salvation; there is you and me; there is good and bad, etc. In other words, there is a sense of 'duality' which never gives permanent peace and bliss for which the creature yearns. But once the mind decides to shut off this world of delusions, then it lives in only one world of spiritual bliss, and it comes from self-realisation, i.e. from realising the true nature of the pure uncorrupt 'self' as the conscious Atma which has nothing to do with either with the world or its delusions.

This is the supreme Tattwa or essence that is achieved by the mind that has withdrawn it self from the confusing and deluding world of duality.]

7. A person who has realised this supreme Tattwa (the essential truth about the Atma and the imaginary nature of this visible world; the basic and fundamental meaning of this world as well as the essential nature and characteristic of the mind; what is duality and what is non-duality) behaves in this world as if he is an innocent child or an intoxicated person oblivious of the surrounding world, or even one who is possessed by a spirit or devil. His behaviour becomes very odd and unconventional, and for all practical purposes it appears that he is very ignorant, stupid or dumb witted. Nevertheless, the response of the world does not bother a truly realised person even a bit for whom the gross world has ceased to exist, and who remains engrossed in the subtle world of spiritual bliss obtained by attaining the knowledge of the 'Param Tattwa' (the ultimate and truthful essence, the absolute reality) (7).

8. By constant, consistent and persistent practice of keeping the mind under leash as well as detached from and dispassionate towards the entrapping, deluding and artificial mundane world and its material sense objects, by keeping the mind from falling prey to the urge to gratify the different sense organs, and by not allowing it to be perturbed by dilemma and confusions created by the sense of duality, i.e. by developing the virtue of 'Amanask', or a neutral and detached state of the mind¹, one can perpetually feel accomplished and experience the everlasting bliss and contentedness that comes with spiritual fulfillment. [This is because the mind is no longer buffeted by confusing and at times opposing inputs from the external world, but remains steady and focused on the Truth instead. This state automatically entails a sense of non-involvement with the world and not caring for it in the least.]

When the ascetic's mind reaches this state, it will be observed that it would effect the physical functioning of his gross body. As a result, the volume of excreta such as urine and faecal matters are also diminished, and the spiritual seeker/aspirant can do with little food to eat. The parts of the body acquire inner strength, stamina, vitality and sturdiness; the gross body does appear to remain lazy, lethargic and indolent but the aspirant is able to overcome sluggishness and drowsiness caused by sleep. The eyes stop their fickle nature (of jumping from object to object); the breath becomes steady and regular (i.e. there is no huff and puff, there is no asthmatic panting or laboured breathing, and neither is there any quickened breath as usual during fevers, or after long running or some other exerting physical exercise, nor a shallow breath as during sleep or low blood pressure).

These meditative accomplishments lead to the joy and bliss of Brahm realisation, which in turn helps the seeker to attain that level of bliss and ecstasy which is so eclectic, profound and magnificent but mysterious that it can only be experienced and felt but never described in words (8).

[Note—¹The concept of *Amanask* state of the mind has been elaborately described in this Upanishad in 1/3/4; 2/2/4; 3/1/1-6 and 3/2/1.

The state of existence of the mind is similar to the one that exists during the trance-like state called Samadhi. See 2/3/4-7 in this context as well as the following verse no.9.]

9. In this way, an ascetic who remains perpetually engrossed in practicing the meditative state called 'Samadhi'¹, and in imbibing the blissful elixir of Brahm realisation which is a fruit of this Samadhi for a prolonged time, matures and graduates to become an 'Avadhut Sanayasi'². He is deemed to be so exalted, holy and

empowered with spiritual energy and vitality that the mere sight of such a person makes the entire world purified and freed from its blemishes and taints.

[That is, such people are pious and clean of heart, and they radiate certain positive energy that helps to nullify the bad effects of the negative energy created by worldly indulgences and routine evil and perversions that are so common in this materialistic world. Their presence acts as a beacon light to remove the darkness caused by the soot symbolised by worldly delusions, ignorance, evil, perversion, moral turpitude etc.]

They have acquired such divine powers and potentials that even those who are known as ‘Agyani’ (i.e. those who are ignorant of the actual truth and the rightful path to follow, and instead remain submerged in delusions and falsehoods pertaining to the world), but are fortunate enough to be in their service (i.e. who diligently follow their path and teachings though they are ignorant themselves and lack correct knowledge of the path leading to spiritual liberation and deliverance), are freed from the bondages of the world. [In other words, those people who are not competent or able themselves to observe the rigors of the path leading to Brahm-realisation, which is called the ‘Param Pada’, but instead choose to diligently and selflessly serve and follow those who are fortunate to tread upon this eclectic and holy path—such servers or followers also reap the fruit of Brahm-realisation. This is very easy to visualise. It will be observed in our day to day lives that servants and close confidantes of rich, influential and powerful people also bask in their master’s glory, and they often wield no less influence and powers than the master himself. In fact it is often seen that the access to the master is in the hands of the servants. Besides this, just like the moon shining under the glory of the sun’s rays, the followers of a self-realised and pious soul whose spiritual achievements radiate out like a divine halo around him too acquire similar glorious hue just by the virtue of their close association with him, for there is an old adage that ‘one becomes like the company one keeps’. Therefore, the followers of an ascetic who has risen high in his spiritual pursuits so much so that he has attained an exalted stature of an Avadhut Sanyasi, which is the best and the highest form of renunciate spiritual life that can be achieved by a monk or friar or hermit, too acquire the glorious qualities and virtues possessed by their teacher and mentor. They are freed from the fetters that tie them down to this mundane life of birth and death by being shown the enlightened spiritual path of liberation and deliverance by such accomplished and acclaimed ascetics who help them to overcome the hurdles created in their spiritual progress by the dark shadow of ignorance and delusions that has completely darkened the path for them; this is accomplished by means of wise advice and guidance, by showing them the correct way by example, and by solving their myriad problems related to their spiritual progress as well as confusions that exist in their minds about what is right and what is not.]

Such a wise, enlightened and accomplished Sanyasi is able to provide liberation and deliverance to one hundred one generations in his family (i.e. compatriots, friends, and kith and kin); his father and mother, his wife and sons³ are also the beneficiaries of this bonanza of spiritual liberation and deliverance.

Verily, this is what this Upanishad says; this is the profound and highly eclectic teaching of this Upanishad. Amen! (9).

[Note—¹The concept of *Sanyas* has been elaborately explained in the following chapters of this volume—(1) Chapter 3, Jabalopanishad, canto 4-6; (2) Chapter 14, Turiyotito-panishad; (3) Chapter 5, Paramhanso-panishad; (4) Chapter 13, Bhikshuko-panishad; (5) Chapter 17, Yagyavalko-panishad; and (6) Chapter 18, Shatyayaniyo-panishad.

²The concept of *Samadhi* has been described in this Upanishad in Brahman 1, Section 1, verse no. 9-10 and Brahman 2, Section 3, verse no. 4-7.

³Their constant company has its affects upon his family members, and it is expected that a truly realised person should start the groundwork of spreading the good word and work right from those people who are directly in his contact. But it also depends much upon these individual's own aspirations and eagerness for Mukti, or obtaining liberation and deliverance from the cycle of ignorance and delusions, for if one is not sincerely interested himself, then merely going to the best of schools and having the best of teachers and the best of guidance would not make him a good student or succeed in life. The basic idea is that such self-realised and enlightened ascetics or hermits or monks or friars have such stupendous spiritual powers and mystical authority that they can bless others with equal greatness without their making much great effort themselves, but much would depend upon the aspirant's or seeker's own integrity, sincerity and earnestness in attaining Mukti by strictly following the guidance and example of such enlightened, self-realised and Brahm-realised teachers.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—11

ADVAI TARAK UPANISHAD

The 'Advai Tarak Upanishad' (pronounced "Advai Taarak Upanishad"), as the name suggests, elucidates about the 'Advai' Brahm, i.e. that Brahm, or that aspect of the Supreme Being or Supreme Consciousness, which is non-dual, and at the same time is 'Tarak' Brahm, i.e. that Brahm which provides liberation and deliverance to the spiritual aspirant. It describes in detail the form of meditation called 'Tarak Yog'.

The word 'Tarak' means to cause or enable to pass or cross over, to carry over, one that rescues, provides relief and succour, one that can provide liberation and deliverance to the creature from any bondage, while 'Advai' means that which has no duality and is one single immutable whole. 'Brahm' of course refers to the supreme transcendental cosmic Authority in creation who is not only the very cause of the coming into being of this whole creation as it is witnessed all around, but also of its sustenance, development and its final conclusion when its time is up; Brahm is the object of all spiritual research and pursuits. Finally, 'Yog' is a word which generally refers to meditation but more technically it implies a union between two entities, and here it implies that form of meditation which can bring about the union between the individual creature's soul and the supreme transcendental cosmic and universal Soul of the creation. In other words, this Upanishad shows the path of Yoga that culminates in self-realisation by the ascetic, and his getting acquainted with the ultimate truth about his own self known as the and the primary source of creation, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, as being two sides of the same coin.

Here emphasis is laid on harnessing the powers of the mind to enable the aspirant to witness the supreme truth or Brahm which is conceived as 'light' (verse no. 13). There are three ways to 'see' that Brahm—one is the internal vision (verse

no. 5), the second is the external vision (verse no. 6), and the third is the median vision (verse no. 7). It goes on to describe how these three visions should be integrated to enable one to witness Brahm, i.e. to practice the 'Tarak Yoga'. The aspirant is advised to seek the guidance of a spiritual teacher and guide, and the qualities of such a person are also enumerated (verse no.14-18). Finally, the benefits of studying the Upanishad are mentioned too (in verse no. 19).

This Upanishad describes, inter alia, the two symbolic forms of the 'Tarak' and the two phases of doing meditation with this concept of Tarak (verse no. 8-11).

Further, the word Tarak also refers to the 'eye of wisdom that liberates one from the darkness of ignorance and delusions', and it has relevance here because meditation leads to the opening of the inner 'eye' of insight that leads to self realisation and enlightenment. There are various Upanishads dealing with this aspect of meditation and spiritual deliverance, and besides this Upanishad the other major text on this subject belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition is the Tarak Upanishad which is chapter no. 16. 'Tarak' also means a meter of 4 x 13 syllables; hence it refers also to the various Mantras used for the purpose of meditation.

The subject matter covered in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad (Chapter 10) is very similar to this Upanishad in terms of its tenor and scope of metaphysical concepts covered, and should be used to supplement and compliment each other. There are slight variations though, but it is because different seers and sages had different personal experiences of the same universal Truth (about Brahm and Atma), and therefore they did not hesitate to put forth the Truth as they had witnessed, experienced or realised it themselves first hand. Then of course there was the problem of the verbal transfer of this knowledge of the Truth from the teacher to his disciple, and then further down the line, necessitating the need of language and words and reliance on memory, which in turn had their own lot of limitations and problems, such as different interpretations and varying use of words. Each individual teacher explained his own experience in his own way, and since there was no standard reference printed books in those times to be mass taught and read, each Upanishad acquired uniqueness, because though they speak about the same universal Truth, the language, the format and style used are different from one to another.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

[This Upanishad is very similar to Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Chapter 10, and to Tarsar Upanishad, Chapter 16 of this volume, supplementing and complementing their teachings.]

1. Now the Upanishad called Advai Tarak is being elucidated for the benefit of Yogis (ascetics), Sanyasis (renunciate wandering mendicants, friars, monks, hermits) and Jitendriyas (those who have self restraint over their sense organs), as well as those who possess the so-called six Gunas or virtuous qualities¹ such as Sham (restraint, peace, tranquility, quietness, suppression of desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses) and Dam (tolerance and fortitude) (1).

[Note—¹The *six Gunas* or noble qualities are the following—(i) Sham (having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses); Dam (tolerance, forbearance, fortitude); (iii) Upriti

(renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha (endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samadhan (solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha (having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion).]

2. Such a spiritual aspirant/seeker concentrates/focuses his attention on the point just above the middle of the two eyebrows by either closing the eyes fully in concentration, or keeping them half closed.

[That is, it does not matter whether the eyes are opened or closed, but his attention should be fixed on this spot where the Bhru Chakra or Agya Chakra is located. This is the subtle energy center in the forehead which governs the awakening of the eclectic virtues of wisdom and enlightenment.]

While meditating thus he should think that he is 'pure consciousness personified'. Such eclectic and ethereal thoughts enables him to witness and experience that essential fount of truthful, eternal and infinite bliss that is glorious and radiant with the splendour of Brahm realisation. Constant and persistent meditation on this point results in the aspirant ascetic becoming one like the object of his attention, which is the self-illuminated eternal blissful Brahm.

[That is, a Brahm-realised ascetic begins to emanate a divine glow to indicate the fact that the hitherto latent divinity that was lying dormant in his bosom has been awakened, and its divine glow effuses from the body of the ascetic like the illumination coming out from the glow worm.] (2).

3. That which provides liberation and deliverance from the horrible torments, agonies, pains and sufferings of remaining in a womb (i.e. prior to taking birth), even during and after taking birth, as well as on becoming old, infirm and decrepit, and finally dying, is called 'Tarak'¹.

Both the worldly creature with a body, known as a 'Jiva' at the micro level, and its macrocosmic counterpart called the 'Ishwar', are sheathed (covered, surrounded) by Maya².

Therefore, after all deluding things and their negative influences are removed, after all ignorance is dispelled, and when the things are viewed in the correct perspective by employing the elimination process called 'Neti-Neti', i.e. the truth is neither that nor this, or in other words what is seen there as a separate or distinct entity known as Ishwar, the supreme Lord or God, and here as the living creature called Jiva, are not two independent things, for their separate existences are simply a misconception of the mind. The underlying essence that makes them both relevant is their Atma or pure consciousness that lends them their authority and powers, their significance and importance. This Atma is Brahm personified. To see anything in them other than their essential form and essential ingredient known as Brahm is trying to ignore the real truth and falling prey to delusions of the mind.

So, what remains after removing all deluding things, after eliminating all falsehoods, is the ultimate 'truth and reality', and it is known as 'Advai Brahm', or the non-dual Brahm. That is, the quintessential and universal Truth is one and the same, it is immutable and unfractionable, it is unchallengeable and irrefutable, and it is known as the 'non-dual Brahm' (3).

[Note--¹That is, the entity that can provide freedom from such sufferings, that which can help one cross the hurdle to his eternal peace and bliss by helping him not to enter this vicious cycle of birth and death again and again, is none other than Brahm. The realisation or attainment of this succour and solace providing supreme Authority is called 'Brahm realisation'. The 'light' that is witnessed upon such realisation is a

metaphor for self-realisation, self-awakening and enlightenment about the eternal, irrefutable and universal Truth. And since 'truth' is always one, non-dual, unchanging, eternal and infinite, this gives the aspirant the satisfaction of successful accomplishment of his spiritual endeavour. Successful accomplishment in any spiritual exercise has as its reward in the form of permanent peace and bliss for the person who had entered into such a spiritual endeavour.

²This is because Maya is the deluding power of the supreme Authority in creation known as Brahm that has been used by him to create the sense of duality. The factual position is that everything is one and the same, and the different views of them is simply an illusion just like one sees a mirage in a desert and thinks it to be real whereas everyone knows that it is a physical phenomenon created due to the effect of excessive heat on desert sand, and it is the deluded mind that thinks it to be real though it is well aware that such things do happen in a desert and it is wise advice not to follow this illusion. Likewise, when Brahm decided to initiate the process of creation, he had to create a smokescreen of delusions to enable him to hide the truth, because otherwise everyone would renounce this world of artificiality and become recluses, and the result would be everyone becoming a monk, renouncing the world, and the resultant termination of the cycle of birth and death! So, under the influence of Maya or delusions, the living creature thinks that it, the Jiva, and Ishwar, the Lord, are two separate entities. The Jiva offers prayers to the Ishwar and looks upon him for his benevolent mercy and intercession in order to survive and prosper in this competitive world; the Ishwar looks upon the Jiva to offer him oblations and worship that would sustain and nourish the former as well as keep him in an exalted and honourable position. There exists a mutual symbiotic relationship between the two. The Jiva lives on the earth, while the Ishwar lives in the heaven. The Jiva watches the exalted stature, glory, fame and powers that the Ishwar possesses, and so the Jiva tries to acquire that stature for himself. Therefore the Jiva does good and auspicious deeds to go up to heaven, but the deeds themselves pull the Jiva down because of their inherent and inbuilt nature to tie down anyone who gets involved in them. So the creature continues to oscillate like a pendulum between being a mortal being living on earth and the immortal being living in the heaven.

This is the genesis of the theory of 'duality'. Both are covered in an invisible veil of ignorance-based delusion. From the metaphysical point of view, Ishwar is the sum total of all the causal bodies that exist in creation, while the Jiva is represented by the individual causal body which harbours the pure conscious Atma or soul. This factor of the 'pure conscious Atma or soul' is common to both the Ishwar and Jiva, and hence to treat them differently is a stupid proposition caused by deluding effects of the mind. This is called being sheathed by a veil of Maya, or being under the influence of ignorance that prevents one from realising the truth and reality.]

4. To successfully attain it (i.e. to attain self-realisation and witness that self-illuminated Brahm), there are three subtle paths to be followed (or three subtle targets which are to be aimed at, or three subtle objects that are to be accomplished) (4).

5. [This verse describes the meditative technique that opens the inner eye of wisdom and insight. It elucidated about that supreme entity that can be perceived and witnessed inside one's own bosom.]

There is a 'Naadi' (a tubular duct or channel inside the body, usually the nerves and veins; here referring to the former) named Sushumna which is radiant and splendorous like the brilliant sun, and is illuminated like the disc of a full moon. It is also called the Brahm Naadi, because it is the duct inside the body that has direct role to play in awakening of the 'self' as well as the realisation of its truthful nature and

stupendous potentials; it is the channel through which one can have access to the supreme experience of Brahm.

It extends from the Muladhar Chakra (at the lower end of the spine, near the anus) right up to the Brahm Randhra Chakra (located at the top of the head). Running through the core of this Naadi, in the form of a hair-like micro thin filament of the dazzling vibrating energy of electric, is the kindled subtle divine energy of the Kundalini. By merely having a mental divine vision of this unleashed energy present in this Naadi, one becomes eligible for obtaining liberation from the bondages of this body and the world, and obtaining deliverance or remittance from the sins and misdeeds that he might have committed.

[This is because this energy is not experienced by all and sundry, and when it does happen its potential powers can help rid one of all his mental perversions and cleanse his inner self much like washing dirty linen in an electric washing machine. The tremendous spiritual energy generated by activating the Kundalini and the subsequent unleashing of its subtle divine energy is like unveiling the glorious sun previously shrouded in a veil of clouds, and thereby unleashing its energy in the form of sunlight.]

A person who concentrates his attention and meditates upon the brilliant source of radiant light perpetually present in the center of the eyebrows (i.e. in the Agya Chakra and called the third eye of wisdom) in conjunction with the divine conscious entity present in the top of the head (i.e. in the Brahm Randhra Chakra as the supreme Brahm) is able to obtain 'Siddhi' or success in his spiritual endeavours and his meditative exercises. In other words, he is able to access the 'Tarak', i.e. he is able to successfully obtain liberation from the limitations and bondages of this gross body and get deliverance from its sufferings and sorrows.

When the two ears are closed with the tip of the index fingers while meditating as above, one hears a hissing sound resembling the one made by a serpent. When one hears it and fixes one's mind on this sound (i.e. concentrates the attention on hearing it), and simultaneously visualises that a blue diffused halo of light is effusing and radiating out from the center of the eyes (at the point mid way between the two eyebrows, from the Agya Chakra), the aspirant ascetic experiences extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy.

[It is like the scene witnessed when one sees a lighthouse from a distance in a rough sea at night—a beam of light comes out from the beacon of the lighthouse and it illuminates the area in its path while the rest of the night sky is pitch dark. The sight of the lighthouse gives hopes and joy to the seaman who has felt lost in the otherwise dark sea at night. The light emanating from the forehead of the aspirant here is the light of wisdom and self enlightenment; it is the light of self awakening that dispels darkness of ignorance and delusions much like the light of the beacon coming out from the lighthouse.]

The above vision of light is obtained in the head. A similar vision is also subtly seen and experienced in the region of the heart. That is, this light along with the hissing sound are witnessed by a spiritual aspirant both at the mental as well as the emotional level.

[This is a very important observation, because both the mind and the heart should play ball in order to help the aspirant to succeed in his spiritual efforts; otherwise he would start wobbling and wavering and ultimately topple over. Coordination between the mind and the heart are very necessary in success of any enterprise, and the word 'Yoga' comes into play here—i.e. a union has to be established between these two legs of spiritualism in order that the chariot of spiritualism reaches its destination successfully and in one piece.]

In this way, a person who seeks liberation and deliverance for himself, an aspirant who seeks emancipation and salvation for his soul, called a 'Mumuksha', should constantly, consistently and persistently practice so that these signs are visible to him and the hissing sound is heard by him internally. He personally witnesses and experiences them in his own bosom, without the aid of any external medium. This is called 'internal signs or visions' of success in spiritual realisation of Brahm (5).

6. [In this verse, the external signs are being described.]

When the meditating aspirant focuses his sight in the space in front of the tip of his nose, he sees different colours in the sky or space at varying distances. At a distance of four fingers, he sees the sky with a light of blue hue; at a distance of six fingers, he sees the sky with a dark hue; at a distance of eight fingers, he sees the sky with a light of red hue; at a distance of ten fingers, he sees the sky with a light of yellow hue; and at a distance of twelve fingers, he sees the sky with a light of white hue. He who stares at that sky element with these varying hues of colours (that appear to radiate out from the center of his eyebrows or his Agya Chakra as described in the previous verse no. 5), and sees them in a perpetual manner, is said to be an accomplished Yogi (ascetic). These colours are clearly visible at a later stage as rays of light radiating out from a source, though in the beginning the eyes shift so rapidly that it is not able to discern them as distinct rays of light but as a mere haze. When these rays are clearly visible then the ascetic is said to be really accomplished and successful. He is deemed to have obtained Siddhi (success).

Though the eyes have a tendency to shift rapidly in the beginning, but by and by their fixing on the target is achieved when, as a result of diligent practice, rays of yellow light seem to emanate from their corners and beam out. They help in fixing the eyes and prevent them from moving from object to object. [Refer to the yellow colour of the sky seen at a distance of ten fingers from the tip of the nose. Practically it is like seeing through a telescope with the inner walls painted yellow.]

An aspirant ascetic who can visualise the ethereal glow of the divine energy present like a halo around the head at a distance of about twelve fingers¹ is able to achieve success in experiencing the essence of eternity and bliss. When an aspirant is able to witness this halo around his head, then no matter where he is and what his circumstances are, he is deemed to be a fully accomplished and an attained ascetic, known as a 'Siddha' (6).

[Note--¹This halo is the divine effulgence of the supreme transcendental Brahm present in the Brahm Randhra Chakra at the top of the head. Just like a glow worm emanating illumination on its own that can be seen even from a distance even if the worm is wrapped in a plastic sheet, the radiance emanating from Brahm forms a halo around the top of the head. Another analogy would be the halo seen around the disc of the full moon when a film of moisture accompanied by suspended dust particles is present in the sky. Refer also to Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahmin 1 and 2. This Upanishad is Chapter 10 of this volume.]

7. [In this verse, the five forms of the sky element are described with their metaphysical relevance that helps the aspirant in his endeavour of Brahm realisation. This is the metaphysical path of mediation that treats Brahm with the attributes similar to the five forms of the subtle skies. Refer also to Mandal Brahman Upanishad, 1/2/11-13, 3/1/5, 4/1/3.]

A person who visualises the vast fathomless sky element¹ representing the supreme Brahm as having the attributes possessed by the sky at the time of sun rise—viz, the sun with a rounded, brilliantly splendid disc, having the fierceness and

radiance like that of the fiercely burning fire—is able to achieve a similarly exalted stature. He becomes an image of that ‘Akash’ or the sky itself where the brilliant sun is seen².

The next sky that is described now is the dark sky before the sun rises, the pre-dawn sky. It is filled with twinkling stars that give the dark sky its soft and subtle hue of light that is almost imperceptible. This sky is called the ‘Paramakash’³.

The third subtle sky is called ‘Mahakash’ and it is dazzling like the fire of Kaal, or the fire of dooms-day⁴.

The fourth sky is called ‘Tattwakash’, or the sky that surrounds the essential and ultimate universal Truth. This sky is considered as the best subtle space because it surrounds and harbours the ‘truth’, and is therefore suffused with a brilliant light typical of Truth⁵. This sky forms the outer periphery of the next sky.

Finally, the fifth subtle sky is called the ‘Suryakash’, and it is brilliant and splendorous as if there were millions of suns in it⁶.

In this way, these five skies present externally in the physical world as well as internally in a subtle way are both indicative of the stupendous powers and potentials of Brahm. The contemplation and meditation on these five skies has as its main objective the realisation of Brahm with all its endless, vast and infinite glories and virtues as represented by these skies. Focusing one’s attention on these skies is aimed at realising the presence of Brahm in them, both at the macro level as well as at the micro level.

He who focuses his attention and worships the boundless sky element with all its subtle forms (aspects) is indeed freed from all his fetters, and becomes boundless and un-fettered like the sky element. Concentrating upon these skies is like focusing on the supreme Brahm that possesses all the virtues possessed by these skies. This liberating and delivering, un-fettering and un-shackling virtue of Brahm represented by the unfettered and unbound vastness of the endless and infinite sky is called ‘Tarak’. It bestows emancipation and salvation to the aspirant ascetic by making him eternally blissful, peaceful and tranquil because his mind ceases to have any relevance in this state as far as this world is concerned. That is, he becomes ‘Amanask’⁷ (7).

[Note— ¹The sky is the subtlest of the five elements (the others being air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth) in creation. Basically sky is indivisible and uniform, but for the purpose of study it has been hypothetically divided into five components or sections. These divisions of the physical sky are based upon the different forms it appears in with respect to an observer on earth. These divisions are then used to draw parallel with various metaphysical concepts in order to bring out the subtle differences between these concepts clearly and make them comprehensible. These hypothetical divisions are therefore used as metaphors for the purpose of study and comprehension, and not to suggest that the sky can be actually divided.

Now, technically the *Akash* is the first form of the sky just above the surface of the earth, the sky which is infinite, fathomless, measureless and eternal, the sky which appears bright during the day time as if it has its own illumination radiating from it, the sky which is dotted by so many things that are extraneous to it but appear to be an integral part of it, the sky which is there but cannot be touched, felt, smelled and tasted but only witnessed, but technically not ‘seen’ because something that is vacant cannot be seen had it not been for the impurities present in it, the sky which appears to have a wide variety of colours like a multi-coloured canvas but is fundamentally colourless, and the sky which is fundamentally pure and uncorrupt and untainted by any of these things. Therefore, this word ‘Akash’ is a hypothetical division of the immutable sky which is used as a metaphor to describe some aspect of metaphysics.

The second division of the sky is the *Paramakash* which is the sky seen during the night time. This portion of the sky is dotted by stars and is not totally dark

because of the light reflected from the twinkling of the stars as well as the presence of the moon, the reflected light from the earth's lighted side and other celestial bodies that reflect sun's light.

The third division of the sky is the *Mahakash* which is the greater sky just like we have a city and its outer suburban out lying areas called the greater city area. This sky is the vast space beyond the solar system, and stretches into the deep recesses of the cosmos, and it includes the inter-galactic space. Obviously this is like hell where there is no trace of life and if any one goes there, even hypothetically, then he just gets lost to humanity. It sure is burning with hellish fire of cosmic explosions where new stars are continuously being born and destroyed, where new galaxies are formed and old ones get annihilated, where suns explode into black holes and supernovas create immense cauldrons of unimaginable heat and energy.

The fourth division of the sky is the *Tattwakash* which refers, as the name suggests, to the essential form of the sky element which is the subtlest form of the five elements created in creation and has, inter alia, such virtues as being infinite, eternal, immutable, immaculate, omnipresent, all pervading, all encompassing, fathomless, measureless etc.

Lastly, the fifth division of the sky is called the *Suryakash* or that portion of the sky that surrounds the celestial Sun. It is therefore as radiant and splendourous as the sun itself, and it is almost impossible to see it with naked eyes. The brightest object in the heavens, the Sun, is present here, and as is well known this Sun is a metaphor for a number of things, such as life as well as the light of knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment and erudition, and therefore for the supreme transcendental Brahm. In fact this Brahm possesses all the virtues displayed by the sky, and therefore the latter is usually used as a metaphor for Brahm, though this Brahm's virtues are not limited to the ones displayed by the sky which forms only a fraction of all the virtues possessed by Brahm.

²A person who has wisdom and erudition to perceive Brahm as having the stupendous glory, radiance, splendour and energy as that possessed by the sun, the potentials and powers of fire, the life creating, sustaining and annihilating powers possessed both by the sun and the fire, and having the attributes of the sky—such as being fathomless, measureless, vast, subtlest of the five elements of creation, incorruptible, inherently spotless inspite of the presence of so many impurities, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, eternal and infinite etc.—becomes enlightened and exalted in his mental stature. Such a man stands out amongst his compatriots and peers, and is honoured and lauded for his wisdom and enlightenment. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he becomes one like the sky element called *Akash*, and he remains firm in his convictions about Brahm and steadfastly established with the eclectic attributes of the sky. He is deemed to be as exalted and honourable as Brahm having the attributes of the sky element.

There is another interpretation to this verse. By realising Brahm, the ascetic acquires a divine halo around him which resembles the bright disc of the sun as it is seen during the day in the sky. His enlightenment and wisdom glow and emanate light which is enjoyed by others; they benefit from his presence amongst them.

³Though the *Parmakash* representing the night sky appears to be dark and blank, it is actually not completely dark as the stars lend their light to it. The ascetic who is enlightened and realised represents the Parmakash because he seems to be bland, blank and disinterested in anything, but this is only a superficial view because darkness of the sky here does not mean ignorance or delusion but of remaining oblivious to all the corrupting influences of the world that might taint an ascetic's mind and heart. His apparently bland and blank heart and mind are twinkling with numerous gems of wisdom which are highlighted only when the dazzle of the sun symbolising the various charms of the world are eliminated. This metaphor of the stars in the background of the dark sky is a brilliant depiction of the vast possibilities and potentials that unfold themselves before a Brahm realised person. This person has

a clean slate like the canopy of the dark sky, but the vast treasury of wisdom and enlightenment that he has is likened to the uncountable stars in the dark canopy of the night sky.

⁴The ascetic acquires such mystical powers as represented by the *Mahakash*, and he can even cause destruction and death if he so wishes.

⁵This *Tattwakash* is the sky that surrounds the transcendental and supreme Truth in creation, which is Brahm, and forms the peripheral sky around the central core. The self-illuminated Brahm is the source of all light in creation just like the celestial sun which is self-illuminated and which lights up the length and breadth of the sky of the solar system. If an ordinary sun has this potential and power, then one can imagine and expect innumerable times more from that authority that has created this sun in the first place and has given it its powers and potentials. After all, even modern science has established that our sun is not the only sun in the universe, and there is uncountable number of suns scattered in the bowl of the cosmos, some still in the nascent stage while others on the verge of extinction. So it is easy to visualise that Brahm which is at the core of this stupendous cosmic cauldron if we were to take only a physical stand on Brahm. From the metaphysical view point, this Brahm is the supreme authority in creation and the Soul of it. It is Brahm that drives this dynamo known as the creation. Therefore the sky or space where it is located is also glowing with the light that emanates from it much like the sky around the celestial sun. When the ascetic has realised Brahm, his inner self also glows with the divine light of self enlightenment, and it becomes as radiant and glorious as the sky around Brahm, because this Brahm is present in his very own self. The whole body of such a realised ascetic becomes radiant and glorious like this sky.

⁶Finally we have the *Suryakash* or that sky that is in the immediate vicinity and in the presence of that stupendous fount of divine energy known as Brahm. This sky forms the inner ring or layer that immediately surrounds Brahm, and therefore it is natural that it is more dazzlingly bright than the other skies that are not so close, and it has a brightness that resembles the blinding light of millions of suns just like the immediate space around the celestial sun. This immediate sky of the sun just cannot be seen by a naked eye, it is impossible to do so, because it would burn the eyes, whereas it is possible to see the sky at a distance from the sun. Similarly, the ascetic's inner core is dazzlingly bright with the light of self-realisation and enlightenment. All other lights, or all other knowledge and all other ways of attaining Brahm pale into insignificance when this light is witnessed by the ascetic in his own bosom.

The concept of the five forms of the sky has been described also in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 4/1/1-4, and Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5-8.

⁷The concept of *Amanask* has been elaborately described in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/3/4; 2/2/4; 3/1/1-6 and 3/2/1 which is chapter no. 19 of this volume. Briefly, The word *Amanask* literally means without the influence of the mind; being de-linked from the mind; annihilation of the mind; absence of the mind. This state leads to serenity, tranquility and peace of the mind and heart. The Atma generally interacts with the outside world through the mind-intellect complex. When the mind is snapped shut, the chain of receptions and responses of the Atma vis-à-vis the world also gets out of functioning. The Atma then remains cocooned in the sheath called the bliss sheath which surrounds it in the causal body. It is not impinged upon by the perplexing impetuses from the outside world because the circuit has been broken at the level of the mind. Hence, the *Amanask* state is when the Atma of the creature, i.e. the pure consciousness becomes detached from and remains oblivious of the deluding external world along with its trademark problems, and consequential becomes rested, peaceful and tranquil. The Atma is uninvolved and aloof from all that the body might be doing in this world if the creature remains permanently in this *Amanask* state, because it is the mind and not the body that actually does the 'thinking, feeling, remembering, analyzing, deciding and responding' to the stimuli that the body receives from the external world. If the mind is stopped from functioning, then the

body may be doing anything but the creature does not register that deed, and therefore the Atma is also not aware of what the body was doing and neither is it responsible for its consequences because it is not a participant in the entire process. That is why this state of Amanask is liberating for the creature's Atma.]

8. According to the canons of Yoga, there are two aspects of doing meditation by following the precepts of Tarak Yoga, and to achieve success in it. These two are the first half called 'Purvardha', and the second half called 'Uttarardha'. The 'sloka' or verse of the scripture that endorse this view says thus—'This Yoga or meditation technique is of two basic types; the first is called 'Tarak' and the second is called 'Amanask' (8).

9. We see the celestial sun and moon through the pupil of our eye. Similarly, one should visualise the presence of a subtle sun and moon in the subtle sky located in the head (around the Brahm Randhra Chakra and the Agya Chakra). [The head is compared to the universe, and the space inside this universe is the subtle sky.] The mind should be taught to treat these two entities, i.e. the sun and the moon symbolising the intelligent and emotive aspects of the mind respectively, as one and the same. [In fact, the moon shines because of the presence of the sun, and this applies to the mind also because without intelligent control, the emotions of the mind would wreck havoc.] The mind should practice and be taught to remain focused on an object, a target, a subject, in order to achieve success in achieving it; this object or target in the present case is Brahm realisation; Brahm is the subject matter of all spiritual quest.

If the mind is not taught to remain steady and focused, then it would be difficult to control the sense organs which have a natural and inherent tendency to swerve or gravitate towards their respective objects in this material world which charms them no end¹. That is why a sincere aspirant ascetic should endeavour to constantly contemplate and meditate upon the 'Tarak' Brahm through his internal eyes of wisdom and enlightenment (9).

[Note--¹For example, the eye has a natural tendency to see that thing which is pleasant and attractive, no matter if that particular thing or scene has a corrupting influence upon the mind and heart. As for instance, one would like to see two bulls fighting each other in a bull fight, oblivious of the fact that the sub-conscious mind is picking up the subtle message of violence, blood and gore, which in their turn would make the man himself violent, blood thirsty and vengeful. But if the mind is practiced to restrain itself, then it would instruct the eye to shun such scenes and instead see more amiable and soothing scenes such as the colourful view of the sky during the rising and setting of the sun, or the swan floating majestically on the surface of a serene lake surrounded by blue mountains and bordered by verdant green forests.

So a wise person is one who channelises his mind into doing constructive things that helps him to achieve success in attaining higher objectives in life than letting the mind remain squirming and splashing in the slush of worldly delusions.]

10. This 'Tarak' meditation that provides liberation and deliverance from the bondages of the body has two aspects. One is called 'Murta' Tarak while the other is called 'Amurta or non-Murta' Tarak. That where the sense organs of perception and action culminate (i.e. the subtle mind) is called the 'Murta Tarak', while that which is beyond their purview, that which is visualised at a spot outside the central point of the two eyebrows, or that which lives in the causal body, is called 'Amurta Tarak'¹.

Therefore the aspirant should always concentrate his attention on the essence of things and not allow it to be misled by delusions. The fundamental essence is

always the same because Brahm is one and non-dual. As a result, he is able to have an experience of the supreme transcendental Brahm as a fount of profound eternal and truthful bliss as well as of bright light having a divine radiance. This establishes that the Brahm that goes beyond these two forms and definitions of Murta Brahm and Amurta Brahm, i.e. the Brahm that is beyond the limiting visions of a formed variety and a variety that has no fixed form, is an auspicious fount of brilliant 'Tej', or divine energy and splendour personified. This Brahm should be seen (witnessed and experienced) by the internal vision of insight, wisdom and enlightenment.

The mind depends upon the eye to see anything in the external world. Therefore, the 'internal eye' is needed by the mind to 'see' (visualise, witness and experience) the divine and subtle light provided by the Tarak Brahm. That is, the eye of wisdom and insight, of enlightenment and erudition is needed to visualise the eclectic and stupendous form of that supreme entity known as Brahm that can actually provide liberation to the aspirant from all his spiritual troubles as well as ensure deliverance to his soul. Without the eye of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge one cannot hope to see (witness and experience) that supreme Brahm although he is residing in one's own bosom. This understanding kindles the light of self-realisation in the aspirant ascetic and opens his inner eyes of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. Such an attained ascetic becomes 'Brahm realised' (10).

[Note--¹The mind-intellect uses the various organs of perception, such as the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin to perceive the external world which is nothing but a manifestation of the supreme Brahm, because that Brahm pervades throughout the creation, uniformly and universally. There is nothing that exists that is not Brahm. This conviction of the mind enables it to see Brahm in the entire world, and since this form of Brahm is visible and in an image form as the myriad shapes and sizes of this creation, it is therefore called Murta or formed aspect of Brahm. The Atma (the pure conscious self which is the true identity of the creature) perceives this form of manifested Brahm and worships it through the external organs of the body—the organs of perception and the organs of action. The mind-intellect complex of the subtle body is the command and control centre for the Atma. Therefore it follows that the Brahm which the creature recognises and worships through his external body that is under the command and control of the subtle body is called 'Murta Brahm'.

On the contrary, ascetics train their mind to focus on the divine light that is seen during meditation in front of their eyes on the tip of their nose as previously described in verse no. 6 above. This form of Brahm is formless, and therefore is called 'Amurta Tarak' or an un-formed variant of Brahm. This wisdom and enlightenment are the exclusive domain of the Atma as the latter is the pure consciousness embodying these grand and eclectic virtues. The higher echelons of the subtle mind (i.e. the thinking and discriminating intellect) perceives the same Brahm in an un-manifested form as the source of all divinity and illumination symbolising all knowledge in existence. It is the divine fount of light that lights up the entire creation, both at the macro level as well as the micro level. It is the pure consciousness in all its glorious magnificence. This subtle and sublime form of Brahm is not visible to the gross organ of the eye like the manifested Brahm with external contours and attributes as revealed in the form of this creation. It is sublimity and subtlety at its glorious best. Hence, this latter form of Brahm that is invisible but nevertheless all-pervading and ubiquitous is called 'Amurta Brahm'. It is also recognised as 'Tej' because it is a fount of splendid light that is the source of all illumination in this creation.

Essentially both forms of Brahm are liberating because both give wisdom and enlightenment to the aspirant, albeit in different ways and contexts. The Murta Brahm is visualised by a wise and intelligent mind which has understood the reality and truth behind the façade of falsehoods, while the Amurta Brahm is witnessed during

meditative exercises that require effort, concentration and practice. Refer Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/3/1-4.]

11. A person who is able to visualise the presence of a radiant source of light at a point just above the middle point of the two eyebrows by his inner sight of wisdom and enlightenment is known as a Tarak Yogi, i.e. an ascetic who has obtained liberation and deliverance, who has crossed over from this mundane world of sense objects, material gratification and delusions, to the transcendental world of spiritualism and divinity. Simultaneously he should practice to raise his two eyebrows a bit so that they fall in line with this point. [This is like focusing the lens of the telescopic camera so as to bring into focus something that is far away and not clearly visible to the naked eye. In metaphysical terms it refers to finding out the truth about and focusing one's attention on Brahman after removing all cluttering delusions and falsehoods that intervene between the aspirant and Brahman. Symbolically, it refers to the fact that he should raise his quotient of wisdom and enlightenment to a higher plane from his existing level.] This is the first half or phase of Tarak Yoga and it is called 'Purvardh'. The second half or phase, which is known as 'Uttarardh', is also called Amurta. During this phase, the mind-intellect becomes defunct (as opposed to the first phase where it remains focused on the light emanating from the point just above the middle of the two eyebrows as described above). This is called the Amanask state of existence. [See verse no.10].

There is a stupendous fount of subtle energy that radiates rays of effervescent light and energy situated at the posterior end of the palate and the roof of the base of the tongue. Yogis (ascetics) are expected to focus their attention on this source of light. This meditation entitles the ascetic to acquire the various mystical powers such as Anima etc. (11).

[Note—There are eight mystical powers or *Siddhis* that acclaimed ascetics possess as a result of their meditation practices. These eight Siddhis are the following-- (i) 'Anima' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Prakramya' is to have valour, ardor, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' is to be able to control and subdue others.]

12. When the aspirant is able to achieve success at coordinating his two visions¹—the external sight having its seat in the organ of the eye and the inner sight of wisdom and enlightenment having its seat in the mind and intellect complex—he is said to be empowered with a mystical vision (which has a magical three dimensional view of Brahman). When such coordination is established, the ascetic is said to be in a meditative posture called 'Shambhavi Mudra'. The place where such realised persons reside is said to be most hallowed and highly exalted; all those people on whom his sight falls also become pure and fortunate. Anyone who worships and honours such a realised and accomplished ascetic (as a personification of Brahman) is able to please him and have easy access to him (in his capacity of being Brahman personified). This bestows upon him the privilege of becoming eligible for getting liberation and

deliverance from this deluding and entrapping world and its accompanying horrors² (12).

[Note—¹This is like the 3 D vision technology of the modern age. In this process, the image seen by the right eye and the left eye are recorded separately and their synchronization is done in the brain to coordinate the two independent images to form a coherent and composite picture that has three dimensions to it—length, breadth and depth. The Yoga described here as well as elsewhere which focuses on the middle of the eyebrows is a meditative version of this 3 D technology to have a vision of Brahm.

²This is because the ascetic referred to here is not an ordinary human being once he has become Brahm-realised. He has become a ‘living Brahm’—a Brahm that lives, speaks and walks in his visible form amongst his followers. That is why a divine halo is said to effuse from the body of such acclaimed ascetics, and their heads glow with the divine light resembling the halo around the sun. By following them, serving them and keeping their company, the follower also reaps the benefit of spiritual welfare just like the moon shines by the light of the sun falling upon it.]

13. His internal vision transforms itself in a fount of brilliant, dazzling and glittering source of white light (like the sun’s light).

[That is, he is empowered with the best form of insight and wisdom, because this ‘light’ is a metaphor for erudition, wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation. This light removes all darkness of ignorance and delusions.]

With the help of guidance provided by a wise and erudite as well as a self-realised moral preceptor and spiritual guide or teacher, called a Guru, a person is able to see/visualise internally that supreme fount of ethereal and glorious light emanating from a subtle divine lotus having a thousand petals that is present inside his own mind as its very core, making up its faculty of intellect.

[That is, the mind’s intelligence is a metaphor for Brahm and his stupendous powers that are manifested in the form of the mind.]

It also resembles the majestic and magnificent pure consciousness that is present in the core of the symbolic lotus having sixteen petals. [This lotus is present in the subtle heart, and it is here that the pure conscious Atma is said to reside.] This consciousness is witnessed in the fourth state of existence called Turiya.

This holistic view of divinity is at the root of good conduct, auspicious behaviour and righteousness (13).

[Note—There are two symbolic lotuses—one has sixteen petals and it is located in the subtle heart, and the other has a thousand petals and is located in the head. The former is where the Hridaya Chakra is, while the latter is the site of the Vyom Chakra. The Atma lives in the former, and Brahm lives in the latter. Merely by their location, the Atma signifies a lower plane of existence vis-à-vis the Brahm. The Atma symbolises the ordinary creature who is controlled and driven by the heart and its emotions and impulses, and Brahm signifies the existence that is controlled and driven by the virtues of wisdom, deep thought and knowledge. Coordination between the two is the aim of Yoga.]

14-15. [These two verses describe the qualities that should be present in a Guru or moral preceptor and spiritual guide that would make him entitled to teach others on spiritual and metaphysical matters and show them the auspicious path leading to emancipation and salvation.]

A Guru should be well versed in the tenets of the Vedas or the knowledge contained in them, must possess the best of virtues and characters and be exemplary

in his behaviours and temperament, should be an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and Lord of the world), should be free from the tainting effects of such negative traits as Matsar (i.e. jealousy, envy) etc.¹, should be an expert in the art, craft and science of Yoga (meditation techniques and contemplative practices) and devoted towards them (i.e. must practice them himself, and be sincere and honest about his firm conviction about their efficacy), should be so involved in the philosophy of Yoga that it forms his way of life and soul (i.e. the philosophy of Yoga should be reflected in his personal life, and his preaching should hold conviction), should be immaculate, pure and uncorrupt, should be devoted towards his own Guru, and should be diligent and committed towards attaining the supreme Lord at all costs (15).

[Note—¹According to the Varaha Upanishad, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are *six enemies* which are metaphors for the various faults that are associated with a creature. They are the following—Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice)

16. The word Guru has two letters—viz. ‘Gu’ and ‘Ru’. The word Gu means darkness, while the word Ru refers to that which can remove or dispel that darkness. Hence, he who is able to remove or dispel the darkness of ignorance and delusions, who prevents these elements from spreading their tentacles of darkness, and in case the darkness already exists then he is able to remove it with his auspicious advice and guidance, and who is able to liberate his disciple from the clutches of this all engulfing darkness that threatens to drown him is called a Guru (16).

17. A Guru is akin to the supreme Brahm personified; a Guru is the supreme abode or shelter that provides succour and solace to the tormented soul of the disciple and the last port of call for him; a Guru is like a treasury of transcendental and eclectic knowledge of Divinity; and a Guru is the best person who should be consulted and followed by a disciple who sees him as a role model to be emulated (17).

18. A Guru represents the best of values and the highest stature a person can ever hope to attain, and a Guru is the best asset that a person possesses (because he gives him good advice and props up his sagging morale during his bad days, he can be faithfully relied upon with no fear of betrayal, he shows him the auspicious, noble and righteous path when he is in a dilemma, he acts as a beacon of hope for his disciple when the rest of the world has betrayed him, and he never has any vested interest in anything other than what is good and fortunate for his disciple and which would ensure his all round welfare and happiness). A person who gives the best advice according to given circumstances and time is said to be the best of all Gurus as far as the disciple is concerned¹.

[Note--¹We should note here that the Upanishads have a very broad and open minded approach to any subject; they are not dogmatic and rigid in their doctrines. A person may be expert in any one field but not in another, and this does not mean that the disciple should not benefit from this man for the knowledge that he possesses. Therefore, for a particular problem a disciple may have one Guru, but for another problem that confronts him he might as well have another. It is not binding upon him that once he has accepted a particular person as his Guru he cannot accept another person as his second Guru. The main function of the institution of a Guru is to help a disciple in all his endeavours, but in an auspicious and righteous manner. Even one’s

own father and mother and wife and son and friend, and for that matter even one's enemy can be a Guru if he can enlighten the person in a particular field.

There is a minor Upanishad called *Dwayo-panishad* which describes the chief characteristics of a true Guru. It has only seven Mantras. This Upanishad is being cited here verse by verse to clearly highlight the main features of a Guru:---(a) Verse nos.1-2= A person is called a Guru if he is endowed with enlightenment and wisdom making him well versed and skilled in the Vedas, both in their literal knowledge as well as in the profound wisdom and the ethereal and eclectic metaphysical and spiritual philosophy they contain, who is an ardent devotee and sincere follower of Lord Vishnu, who is free from such negative traits as jealousy, envy and malice, who is well versed and skilled in the various holy and divine Mantras, their usage, their ethereal importance and spiritual significance as well as all other matters related with them, who is sincerity devoted to those Mantras and has firm belief, conviction and faith in them, who seeks the shelter and refuge of those Mantras, who is pure and immaculate, uncorrupt and unpolluted in any form, who is devoted and dedicated to his own Guru, and who is well versed and skilled not only in all the Purans but all other scriptures as well.

(b) Verse no.3= A person is called a Guru who has a comprehensive and holistic knowledge and understanding of all the scriptures, and who not only preaches righteousness, probity and propriety as well as nobility of thoughts and actions but also lives them and implements them in their letter and spirit in his personal life.

(c) Verse no. 4= The letter 'Gu' means darkness, while the letter 'Ru' means that which remove that darkness. Hence, Guru is one who removes the darkness representing ignorance and delusions that are so typically associated with this deluding world.

(d) Verse no.5= A true Guru is equivalent to the supreme and transcendental Brahm; he is the ultimate destination for a seeker; he is a fount of the supreme knowledge and the source of the best of such knowledge; he is deemed to be the best and the greatest asset for a man.

(e) Verse no.6= A Guru is the best thing a wise seeker seeks and searches for, he is the best and the supreme place for seeking refuge and shelter with, and he being a dispenser of the profoundest of wisdom and knowledge is deemed to be a person who is the most important, who has the highest standards of greatness and magnificence, who is most dignified and meritorious, who is most weighty and significant, and who is most distinct and outstanding in all aspects.

(f) Verse no.7= Pronouncing the word 'Guru' even once enables the aspirant to access liberation and deliverance from this entrapping and deluding world. All his efforts are deemed to have been successful by simply saying this powerful word sincerely. Such a man does never come back (enters the cycle of birth and death) in this world again—verily, this is the truth. Those who understand this fact correctly get the desired fruit'.]

19. A person who reads and studies this Upanishad is able to get liberation and deliverance from this entrapping world of artificiality and delusions. All the affects of his accumulated sins of his many previous lives are destroyed (nullified and made ineffective; remitted). All his various desires, hopes, wishes and expectations are fulfilled. All his endeavours bear fruit (i.e. are successful and are rewarded).

A person who understands and realises the import of this teaching is indeed the one who is well versed in the knowledge contained in this as well as all other Upanishads. This is verily what this Upanishad says. Amen! (19).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—12

PAINGAL UPANISHAD

The ‘Paingal Upanishad’ belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition can be called an omnibus Upanishad because it covers a number of topics. It is a conversation between sages Paingal and Yagyavalkya. It has four elaborate cantos.

Cantos 1 and 2 beautifully describe the genesis of creation of the universe in great detail. This has an uncanny resemblance to Aitereiyo Upanishad of Rig Veda tradition, and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 1 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition which is Chapter no. 2 of this current volume. Another great Upanishad called Chandogya of the Sam Veda tradition also describes the process in similar manner in its canto 6. This Upanishad is included as chapter no. 2 of the volume dealing with the Upanishads of that Veda.

These two Cantos describe the creation of the elements, the Gunas, the Maya, the Jiva (the living being), the various components of the body, the two planes of existence—viz. the macrocosmic and the microcosmic, how the Supreme Being metamorphosed as the Jiva, and how they are alike as well as different, and such other concepts in fine detail.

Canto 3 describes the four great sayings of the scriptures—viz. (a) ‘Tattwa-Masi’, i.e. that is you; (b) ‘Twam-Tadasi’, i.e. you are that; (c) ‘Twam-Brahmasi’, i.e. you are Brahm; and (d) ‘Aham-Brahmasi’, i.e. I am Brahm. This resembles the Shukar Rahasya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

Finally, canto 4 describes the characteristics and the virtues of those who are truly wise and enlightened in the true sense of the word, their thoughts actions and deeds, how they are able to burn their past deeds and their incumbent effects so that they can obtain freedom from their entangling affects that tie down an ordinary creature to an endless cycle of birth and death. This freedom provides them with the supreme stature known as ‘Kaivalya’ or literally ‘the only one’ state of existence which is the culmination of the ultimate truth about Brahm realisation. This concept has been described in numerous Upanishads, more recent ones being Mandal Brahmin (Chapter 10) and Advai Tarak (Chapter 11).

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no.1 for the meaning of the Shanti Paath.

Canto 1

1. Once, sage Paingal went to sage Yagyavalkya and served him for twelve years. Then he asked the latter to teach him about the mysteries and secrets of 'Kaivalya' (1).

2. Sage Yagyavalkya said, 'In the past or in the beginning, there was only one essential element called 'Sata' or the 'essential truth'. It is called Brahm; it is characterised by such virtues as being eternal and infinite, free from all encumbrances, being without any faults and shortcomings, being an absolute and irrefutable truth, being an embodiment of wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge and erudition, being beatitude and felicity personified, and being a non-dual entity that is one, universal, immutable whole (2).

3. Even as water appears to be present in the mirage seen in a desert, silver appears to be present in the inner shiny surface of the oyster shell, a pillar or a trunk of a tree resembles the male phallus, and crystal appears to have superficial linings, the primary and primordial 'Prakriti'¹, or Nature, having three primary shades of colours such as red (blood-like), white (silver-like) and dark (night-like), was imagined to be present in that 'Sat' (truth). In other words, the Prakriti or Nature was supposed to be an imaginary creation emerging or making its appearance from the primary and eternal 'truth' which was immaculate and untainted. These three colours, present in equal amount and intensity, represented the three Gunas or qualities² that formed the fundamental nature and defined the inherent qualities and virtues of this Prakriti. Since initially they were in equal proportions/ratios, the resultant effect was a neutral entity. In other words, this Prakriti was primarily present as an integral part of Truth known as Brahm, but originally it was 'neutral and colourless' like its principal, the neutral, pure, uncorrupt, taintless, formless and attributeless Brahm, because all these three colours representing the three basic qualities called Gunas were in equal quantity and neutralized each other. [It was later on when they gradually began to combine with each other in different proportions that they segregated themselves into different shades of colours symbolising different characteristic traits, nature and temperaments present in the countless creatures of the creation revealed as a magnificent and charming world of multiplicity and variety.]

What was initially reflected like an image in a mirror at the beginning of creation was this Prakriti having the three Gunas which were initially present in a neutral state in the principal from which Prakriti was born, and which is known as Brahm. That is, Prakriti was primarily an image or reflection of what Brahm was like—it inherently possessed everything that Brahm possessed as represented by the presence of these three primary colours in it, but it nevertheless remained neutral in the beginning. Since any image must have a principal of which it is a reflection, this Prakriti had Brahm as its primary principal. In other words, what was reflected as Prakriti or Nature was indeed Brahm.

This Brahm was consciousness personified and the primary Truth. This is because only the 'truth' can have an image; we do not see any reflection or image of imaginary things in a mirror. Brahm is consciousnesses because anything that is inherently and fundamentally 'alive' can ever hope to exhibit the powers of creation and imagination, as dead entities cannot create and imagine. Therefore, what this Prakriti reflected was primarily pure truth and consciousness known as Brahm (3).

[Note—¹*Prakriti*-- The word basically means 'nature' with all its connotations. The Chambers dictionary defines it as the power that creates and regulates the world; the power of growth; the established order of things; the cosmos; the external world especially that untouched by man; the inherent qualities in anything that makes it what it is; the essence; the being; the constitution; a kind or order; naturalness; normal feeling; conformity to truth or reality; the inborn mind; the character, instinct or disposition; the vital power; the course of life; the nakedness of truth; the primitive undomesticated condition; the strength or substance of anything; a deity personifying some force of physical nature.

Sir Monier Monier-Williams, in his encyclopedic Sanskrit-English dictionary describes it thus—'making or placing before or at first'.

The word *Prakriti* has many connotations, viz. the original or natural or basic form or condition of anything; the original or primary nature, character, condition, constitution, temperament, disposition; the fundamental form or shape or essence or pattern or standard or model, rule; Mother Nature which has the active physical natural forces that are responsible for unfolding the creation, its sustenance and annihilation; something that is inherent, innate, genuine, unaltered, unadulterated, basic, normal, bare, naked, crude, integral and stripped of all pretensions; the fundamental pattern, form, standard and model upon which the rest of the things are based; the crude or basic or root or seed form of any word, and by extension of anything expressed; that which decides the existential mode of anything; the coefficient, the multiplier of any fundamental element.

As inherent nature and temperament of a creature, it determines the way the world behaves and thinks; it determines the basic character of the creature and the creation as a whole because the individual creature is but a single unit of the creation.

The word *Prakriti* also refers to the 'personified will of the Supreme Being in the creation', and it therefore is synonymous with the powers of the Supreme Being personified as Mother Nature in whose womb the entire creation has revealed itself. It is deified forces of Nature and revealed as different renowned and powerful Goddesses.

The *Prakriti* represents the cosmic creative will of the creator that has revealed itself as the primary female aspect of creation which is known as 'Shakti', while its male aspect is known as the 'Viraat Purush'. The Shakti is the active ingredient or force that creates and regulates everything, while the primary entity or Being whose will this Shakti is implementing is called Brahm who remains passive.

According to the Purans, this *Prakriti* or Nature has been personified as different Goddesses, while Brahm has been known as Viraat Purush in the terminology of Vedanta or the Upanishads, and Vishnu in the Purans. The Shakti is the female aspect of Purush, and is considered as inseparable from him; in fact they are two halves of the same Brahm. In order to create, Brahm revealed himself in these two primary forces which revealed themselves as the cosmos or Nature. As the different inherent tendencies of a creature, the forces of creation came to be known as Sattva, Raj and Tam which determines and regulates the continuous cycle of creation, sustenance and conclusion. The Purush is the male aspect while his female counterpart is the *Prakriti*. Since a man resides in this world, he is surrounded by Nature which casts its shadow upon him. All the maverick tricks that Mother Nature knows create an impression upon a man. He is enthralled and so overwhelmed by the

deception created by Nature that he forgets about the falsehoods of what he sees, as well as about the truthful nature of his own pure self. He is deluded by false impressions so much so that they appear to be true to him. Consequentially, he drifts along in the swift currents created by those delusions. He acquires the colours of Prakriti without realising the truth about its falsehood.

According to Sankhya Shastra, Prakriti is the original producer of the material world consisting of the three Gunas or fundamental qualities that are inherent in all the creatures and they decide the character and temperament of that creature depending upon the dominance of one quality over the other two. These three Gunas are—(i) 'Sattwa', or those which are auspicious and righteous and noble, (ii) 'Raja', or worldly qualities marked by such notions as having passions, desires, greed etc. and (iii) 'Tama', or those qualities that are 'dark' by nature, such as those that are catagorised as sinful and pervert, leading to a creature's moral downfall.

²The *three Gunas*-- The three characteristic qualities inherently present in the creature are the three thought textures which bombard the mind. These three thought textures are manifestations of the 'Vrittis and Vasanas' (inherent tendencies or desires) of the creature which mire its soul as a covering or veil.

(a) 'Sata Guna or quality' is the noble, virtuous, auspicious and good qualities present in a creature. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually unlifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. (b) 'Raja Guna or quality' covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being. (c) 'Tama Guna or quality' is the third quality; it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc.—i.e. in brief, immoral, denigrating and depraved behaviour marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of misdemeanours. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to a person's downfall, ignominy and ruin.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body —e.g. two men —might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in

84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three ‘Gunas’ and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The Satwic quality or Guna is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

The Rajsic quality or Guna can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

The Tamsic quality or Guna covering the soul is like a foetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of ‘Satvic’ (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of ‘Rajsic’ or ‘Tamsic’ qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of ‘Satvic’ qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of ‘Rajsic’ quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher ‘Tamsic’ quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.]

4. When that primary Prakriti¹, which was initially as pure as its principal Brahm (as described in verse no.3), became corrupted by these three Gunas due to their gradual polarization, it formed an invisible veil covering the ‘truth’ or Brahm. [In the beginning, the Prakriti was as transparent, neutral and colourless as Brahm. But gradually, due to the processes of evolution, the three primary colours began to separate and acquire their own independent hues, and they further mixed with each other in infinite permutations and combinations to create un-imaginable hues of colours which symbolically represented as many character traits and personalities of the creatures that would emerge in the unfolding creation. The Prakriti lost its homogeneity, uniformity, neutrality and transparency in the process as a result of polarization of colours, and hence the covering around the Truth (Brahm) became non-transparent and acquired an ever-changing hue and texture. What was primarily untainted and colourless became tainted with the changing hues and varying shades of

the three primary colours representing the basic character traits and virtues (Gunas) that prevail in this creation. The possibilities of colours that could be formed by mixing of these three primary colours in different proportions were simply immense and mind-boggling, thereby opening the Pandora's Box of myriad variety of creation and its equally diverse inhabitant creatures with different characteristics. The diversity was so marked that no two units of this creation looked alike.]

This was called 'Avaykta Avaran Shakti' or the invisible and un-manifest veil that formed a covering around the almighty power represented by the power of 'truth' that it shrouded. This power of Truth was Brahm. Now this Authority had to act from behind this veil, and therefore this veil representing Prakriti appeared to have all the powers that Brahm possessed, because from the point of the viewer he saw this transparent veil of Prakriti, which was covering Brahm, as the entity that was actually displaying all the virtues he had thought were possessed by Brahm. So he began to identify Prakriti with Brahm in his ignorance of the actual fact. The supreme Lord who was reflected in this veil was the pure consciousness (or Brahm).

[Suppose a person wears a full body-covering apron—from the head to the foot. We would recognise him by this apron and its colour etc. simply because we have never seen him without it; we haven't seen his physical body and how he actually looks. The same thing applies here to Brahm. No one has seen Brahm, but he is recognised in the way he has revealed himself as this visible world. When Brahm's Gunas, represented by these three primary colours, failed to retain their balance, they created a 'coloured' closely fitting veil around Brahm. Whatever the characteristic traits these colours represented began to be closely associated with Brahm. In other words, that Brahm, which has been described by the scriptures as being basically neutral, attributeless and invisible, began to be viewed with these tainted characteristics. Thus, the fundamentally attributeless Brahm acquired attributes as represented by the three basic Gunas in their infinite varieties which were the result of infinite ways in which these Gunas could combine and mix in this creation. This is the reason why the visible creation has such diversity and variation.]

That Lord is called 'Ishwar'² or the lord of all because he keeps Maya (delusions and ignorance) under his control; he is the cause of creation, its sustenance, and its conclusion. Indeed he resembles the seed in which the creation is present as a sprout. He is the one who can make this entire universe which is integrally present in his bosom to emerge or reveal itself. He unfolds this vast theatre of creation and appoints its actors depending upon the past deeds of these individual creatures. [That is, even as a director appoints actors and others according to their competence, knowledge, skills, abilities and aptitudes as well as their experience, and other factors as time they have put in the theatre, whether they have done a good job etc., the cosmic director named Ishwar also assigns specific duties to each individual creature according to what they have learnt in their past by suffering or enjoying the consequences of their deeds, whether they have done any good deed or not, whether they remain mired in the worldly muck or sincerely wish to rise higher in the echelons of spiritual hierarchy, etc.]

Similarly, he causes the canvas of the world to fold up when the deeds of the creatures become degrading to such an extent that the entire setup is about to sink into the nether world of sins and vices. It is at that time that he winds up the theatre and retires its actors till the time a new theatre group is set up by him!

At the time of conclusion of the creation, it is withdrawn into the primary source from where it had come into being just like the folded canvas and props of the theatre are stored in the warehouse with the owner once the company winds up.

[When the time is up, all the colourful props and background canvases that help to conjure up a fascinating but imaginary world of magnificent variety and charm on the stage by the theatre company, are neatly folded up and tucked away in the store of the owner. This analogy is used to show how the master and lord of creation winds up the show when he is fed up with its actors, who in the case of the creation are the numerous creatures having different characters and attributes just like the different actors of a theatre who display varied talents. When any actor does not improve himself even after long stint of practice and practical exposure at work, the director would be left with no choice but to retire him, or shunt him to some inconsequential job. This is exactly what the Lord of creation does in order to keep the creation under check and functioning properly.] (4).

[Note--¹When this *Prakriti* having these three Gunas as represented by the three colours of red, white and black formed a symbolic veil over the 'truth', the latter appeared to be tainted by these three colours. This is evident when we wrap anything with a coloured piece of a see-through plastic foil; the enclosed object appears to have lost its originality and assumes the colour of the covering. This also applies to Brahm. When the latter was covered by the three Gunas of *Prakriti*, it became to be recognised as *Prakriti*. They became synonymous with each other, though Brahm was free from the tainting effects of the three Gunas. It must be noted here that in verse no. 3 it is clearly stated that these three Gunas represented by the three colours were inherently present in Brahm even before they began to taint it with their colours, but initially they were in a neutral state because they were in equilibrium. It was only when imagination took over and Maya or delusions arising out of ignorance had the upper hand that this situation arose whereby Brahm began to be identified with corrupted *Prakriti*.

This creation is merely a combination of different qualities and virtues represented by these three primary colours, and since the permutations and combinations with which these three colours can combine are endless, we have as many varieties of creatures displaying as many uncountable numbers of qualities and virtues. But in all this, that Brahm is merely a mute witness; he has got nothing to do with this. Taking the examples cited in verse no. 3, the water in a mirage has an illusionary presence but a thirsty man believes in its presence and rushes towards it, never to find it. On the contrary, this water moves ahead of him and keeps him drowned in falsehoods and illusions until he dies of endlessly pursuing it. The same logic applies to the oyster shell; no one can find silver trying to seek it in the shell, but since he has himself seen it there he would be convinced of its presence notwithstanding anyone telling him that he is mistaken in his beliefs. Therefore, what appears on the surface is not always the truth! So though *Prakriti* or Nature was deemed to be pure like its principal Brahm, it turned tainted because of intervention of Maya which caused delusions based on ignorance that led to all sorts of hallucinations about Brahm and *Prakriti*.

There is another spin off here. The world is Brahm, and vice versa—this is the constant refrain and universal philosophy expounded by the Upanishads and forms the basis of the great tenets of Advaitya Vedanta, the philosophy of non-duality. The reason why such great and astounding degree of variety exists in this creation inspite of this non-dual nature of Brahm is explained above. It is these three Gunas which combine in infinite ways to colour the same Brahm with myriad colours of varying hues and shades that this creation appears so varied and diverse that no two units of it are alike. This is because this creation is an image or manifestation of Brahm, and therefore the colour of Brahm would reflect itself in this creation. But a wise man knows that once the misleading colours are washed off, the primary colours remain, which is a metaphoric way of asserting that the same universal and uniform identity of Brahm as Truth would emerge once all delusions and ignorance surrounding it are dispelled.

²*Ishwar*—Ishwar is the cosmic causal body of the immanent, all-pervading and omnipresent Brahm. This Ishwar has the counterpart in the individual creature or Jiva as Pragya—one who is aware, knowledgeable, wise, enlightened, intelligent, erudite, sagacious, expert and skilled. These are the attributes of Brahm who has revealed himself at the cosmic level in the body known as Ishwar, and at the micro level in the causal body of the individual creature as its Atma known as Pragya. Why is the causal body ‘Pragya’? It is because of the light of wisdom, enlightenment etc. emanating from the self-illuminated Atma that resides inside its inner chambers. This Atma is surrounded by the bliss sheath much like the embryo surrounded and protected in the mother’s womb by the embryonic membranes. The Atma is ‘blissful’ because it is Brahm personified.]

5. The potential to ‘create’ that is inherently present in that supreme transcendental Brahm then created the situation when the second quality called ‘Raja’ became a predominant quality, and this gave rise to the character trait called ‘Vikshep’ (which is literally the power to create doubts, confusions, uncertainties, perplexities, fickleness, restlessness and agitations in the creature). This quality had great potentials, and was responsible for much of the formidable delusions that marked the worldly creature’s nature, temperament and inclinations. That is why it was called ‘Mahat’, literally meaning great, formidable and stupendous in reach and potentials. This formed the second layer of the veil around the supreme consciousness called Brahm represented by the supreme Authority called Ishwar.

Surrounded by this veil of Vikshep, the supreme conscious entity that was reflected through it was called Hiranyagarbha. This entity has the quality of Mahat, or is of great importance and potentials as far as the creation is concerned. It is part visible and part invisible. In other words, it is like something seen through a translucent screen (5).

[Note—The entity that was seen in verse no. 4 was like something seen through a transparent screen, while that seen in verse no. 5 is like that seen through a translucent one. The difference is obvious—in the first case the sight is very clear and the original entity is seen in its almost pristine form, whereas in the second case it is tainted by the intervening part opacity of the screen. For example, when anything is seen through a plain glass we observe its true form and colour, while when the same thing is seen through a tainted glass then the colour of the object seen is bound to be affected by the colour of the intervening sheet of glass. In verse no. 4, the pure and uncorrupted form of Brahm or pure consciousness is observed because the intervening veil is of a ‘Sata’ quality which is a metaphor for a purity and holiness, and therefore its good virtues are discernible. That is why it was described by the epithet ‘Ishwar’. In verse no. 5 it is seen through a tainted veil which has ‘Raja’ quality in predominance, and this affects its view and the pure conscious appears to be partly immaculate and holy, and partly affected by the virtues that are characteristics features of this deluding world of faults and illusions; it is like seeing a mirage. This view presented a tainted vision of Brahm, and it was called Hiranyagarbha because this distortion was the incubator in which the egg of the future world would hatch.

According to the philosophy of Vedanta, this Hiranyagarbha is the macrocosmic subtle body of the creation; it is like the cosmic egg in which the first signs of the forthcoming creation—which is a metaphor for the first signs of delusions—made their appearance. Even as by merely seeing a egg it is not possible to describe or forecast what type of creature with what type of characters, features, attributes and nature etc. would emerge from it, it was impossible to say what this Hiranyagarbha foretold or portended. Further, the forthcoming creation was inherently present in this shapeless primordial egg, but the shape of the would-be creation just could not be

discerned or perceived or imagined in it; this shape was unpredictable. This is what is meant by saying that it was partly visible and partly invisible.]

6. From the quality of 'Vikshep Shakti' (i.e. the power to create delusions and confusions), which was subtly present in Hiranyagarbha (as described in verse no. 5), there emerged the third quality of 'Ahankar', or ego and pride, which in its wake led to the creation of such traits as arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy. This is the grossest form of 'Shakti', or the powers and potentials that were depicted by the supreme entity that was veiled by Prakriti. In other words, the supreme consciousness, when seen through the veil of delusions (verse no. 4), appeared to have the notion of Ahankar in it. This entity that had this trait of Ahankar in it was called 'Viraat Purush', or the gross form of Hiranyagarbha. That is, this Viraat was the personification of the supreme Brahm's potentials to show its abilities that it can do, and achieve success in doing even the unimaginable and most formidable of tasks, such as creating this vast universe from literally nothing, a creation that is visible as well as invisible, a creation that is immobile as well as mobile, a creation that is mortal as well as immortal, a creation that is so true-looking but essentially hollow and false, and which is a metaphor for the greatest of paradoxes and delusions.

This Viraat form, or the vast and colossus form of the supreme consciousness marked by the virtue of Ahankar, was called Vishnu. He is the sustainer and nourisher of the entire gross world; he is the chief Purush or the Lord of this creation. [In other words, Brahm's potentials and powers to sustain and nourish what was created is exhibited by Vishnu; he is the personification of these virtues of Brahm. Since this world was gross and needed an entity that could fit into its mould, this Vishnu is also deemed to be the gross form of the invisible and subtle, the un-manifested and attributeless supreme transcendental Being called Ishwar.

[Vishnu had the quality of Ahankar because of the fact that Brahm was now proud of his creation as well as of the fact that he can maintain and develop it in his form as Vishnu. He was also proud of the fact that he has the potentials, powers and authority to create the patriarch Brahma, and the concluder Shiva. As has already been stated earlier in verse nos. 4-5, the very fact that Brahm's neutrality was lost due to the dominance of one or the other Gunas (qualities), there is no wonder in his having got tainted by Ahankar which is in itself a negative trait. See also note to verse no. 10 of this Canto. This observation that 'Ahankar' is so powerful a negative trait that it was even able to subdue the supreme Lord of creation known as Brahm and entangle the otherwise immaculate divine entity in the web of delusion and self-grandeur leads one to be wary of this dangerous pitfall in one's own life lest it would also lead to one's own downfall. It ought to be noted here that more than the actual words of the texts of the Upanishads, it is the hidden meaning and subtle message that they contain that is of greater importance for the general mental, ethical and spiritual welfare and good of mankind. So it is of utmost importance that the texts should be interpreted correctly to bring out the essence in them.]

Even as all entities in this creation have an Atma, this Vishnu also was no exception¹. From his Atma was produced the 'Akash' or sky or space element. From the former was produced the 'Vayu' or air or wind element; from this was created the 'Agni' or fire or energy element; from it was produced the 'Apaha' or the water element; and from it emerged the 'Prithivi' or earth element². From them emerged the five 'Tanmatras'³ or the different senses of perceptions, and the three inherent 'Gunas'⁴ or qualities that are invariably present in all the units of the creation, i.e. in all the creatures (6).

[Note—¹According to the concepts of Vedanta, this Viraat Purush known as *Vishnu* represents the sum total of all the gross bodies of creation. That is, he stands as the tree of which the rest of the creation is one or the other part; or the creation is the visible aspect of the Viraat. As the word itself implies, Viraat is vast and colossus, with infinite dimensions. Now, each gross body has a subtle body, and that is Hiranyagarbha as far as the creation at the macro level is concerned. This body must have a third body—and this is the causal body which is called Ishwar. This Ishwar is therefore that causal body which is the ‘cause’ for the entire creation. The causal body harbours an Atma which is covered in the veil of Vasanas and Vrittis, or the various worldly passions, desires, attachments and delusions that are the inherent tendencies and inclinations that are characteristic features of a worldly creature. This is the ‘veil’ that surrounds the Atma. At the macro level, these are exhibited by Atma of the creation also. This Atma of creation is the Brahm at the cosmic and macro level, and the virtues mentioned in verse nos. 4-6 are the various qualities that are exhibited by it. Thus, Brahm is the Atma of Vishnu, and what was created by Vishnu was actually done by that cosmic Atma or supreme transcendental Brahm present imperceptibly inside the bosom of Vishnu as the latter’s consciousness and his true identity.

²The *five elements*—these are the basic building blocks of life in this creation. They are sky, air, fire, water and earth. The gross body of the creature is made up of these five elements in varying proportions. According to Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, the ratio of these elements in this creation is the following—earth is one half, and the rest half consists of water, fire, sky and air elements in the ratio of one-eighth each.

According to the Jabal-darshan Upanishad, the body has all these five elements present in it, but some parts have some element in predominance or greater ratio than the other—e.g. the part from the foot up to the knees has the ‘earth’ element in greater ratio; from the knees to the anus has the ‘water’ element in a greater ratio; the part from the anus to the heart has the ‘fire’ element in a predominant ratio; from the heart up to the eyebrows the ‘wind’ element dominates; from the eyebrows right up to the top of the head the ‘sky’ element is the dominant element.

The various Gods thought to be established in these elements and preside over their functions (or who are regarded as their patron Gods) are the following—Brahma the creator in the earth element; Vishnu the sustainer in the water element; Shiva the concluder in the fire element; Ishwar the macrocosmic causal body in the wind or air element; and the all-pervading and all-encompassing supreme truthful and universal entity known as Brahm in the sky element. It would be obvious to even a lay person the significance of these Gods vis-à-vis the different elements. Brahma is the creator, and earth is also the place where all forms of life take birth. Water is called the elixir of life, and hence Vishnu rightly represents it. Fire is famous for its ruthless and destructive nature and Shiva is also reflective of these properties. The Lord Ishwar is like wind because without the air no life is possible anywhere; the wind is literally the lord of life. The sky is fathomless, infinite, pure and incorruptible like the Brahm; it is in the space of the sky that whatever that exists has its presence, for there is nothing outside the sky. So these Gods symbolically represent the primary forces of creation. [Jabal-darshan Upanishad, 8/5-6.]

³The *five Tanmatras*—these are the five perceptions of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch that are invariably present in all living creatures. Even trees and worms and insects exhibit them in one form or the other.

⁴The *three Gunas*—these have been discussed in note of verse no. 3.]

7. When the supreme creator desired/wished to create the cosmos/universe/world, he invoked his third quality called ‘Tama’, and then under its influence he wished to establish the three subtle Tanmatras (senses of perceptions of the future organs) into

the gross forms of the five primary elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky). [In other words, the primary elements which were hitherto neutral and dormant were now infused with the powers to smell, taste, create, destroy, move about, produce sound that can be heard, and spread their influence in the entire creation while occupying all available space. The result was the subtlety of the elements was undermined, and injected with the Tama aspect of Brahm, they became gross in a gradual and progressive manner.]

Each of these elements was then divided into two, and each of these divisions was then again divided into four sub-segments or sub-divisions. He then took one half fraction of each sub-division of these elements and mixed one-eighth fraction of each of the remaining elements with it. This resulted in the possibility of the creation having an infinite variety of entities which constituted the basic ingredients used to mould this stupendously vast, fascinatingly infinite and magnificently myriad creation where no two entities were alike. These variations were so unimaginably countless that literally it was 'apparently endless and infinite, apparently eternal and fathomless'. [That is, these virtues of being endless, infinite, eternal and fathomless were the epithets assigned to the creation because it was so vast and of such a stupendously great variety that it was not possible to measure it or see from where it has its beginning and where it has an end. Refer also to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 1/4-9 and 2/1-18, which is Chapter no. 9 of this volume.]

To create a place where this new creation can be placed or rested, he established the fourteen Bhuvans¹ (the mythological abodes of the creation according to Purans). Once this basic foundation was laid, he then needed the creatures that would now inhabit and populate this creation. So he created the creatures in accordance to the environs of the respective Bhuvans. That is, though the types and number of creatures created by him were much more and many millions of times greater than the number of Bhuvans created, he assigned to them these fourteen abodes depending upon their suitability and adaptability. [After all, what was the use of creation of such a formidably vast and varied world and its inexhaustible supply of natural wealth and resources if there was no one to live in it and enjoy them? So the creator felt the need to create a 'living being' in his own image so that he can enjoy this theatre, albeit in the guise of a creature; that is why the creature is regarded as an image of the supreme Lord.] (7).

[Note—¹The *fourteen Bhuvans*--according to Padma Puran, they are the following— (A) The upper worlds called Urdhava Lokas (उर्ध्व लोक) are seven in number— (i) Bhu (भूः), (ii) Bhuvha (भुवः), (iii) Swaha (स्वः), (iv) Maha (महः), (v) Janaha (जनः), (vi) Tapaha (तपः), and (vii) Satyam (सत्यम्). (B) The seven nether worlds called Adha Loka (अधः लोक)— (i) Atal (अतल), (ii) Vital (वितल), (iii) Satal (सुतल), (iv) Rasatal (रसातल), (v) Talatal (तलातल), (vi) Mahatal (महातल), and (vii) Patal (पाताल). The total number of Lokas is, therefore, fourteen.]

8. As a next step in the process of creation, the creator separated those parts of the five elements that had the 'Raja' quality (which is the second and the medium type of quality among the three basic qualities that are inherently present in the entire creation and which determine its basic nature and character) in predominance. Then he divided them into four equal parts. Out of this, he used three parts to create the five 'Prans'¹ or the vital winds that sustain life inside the body of a living creature. He used the fourth part to create the organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and genitals) (8).

[Note—¹The *five Prans*--(1) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) Apaana, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) Saman, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (4) Udaana, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) Vyan, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

According to Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, these ten winds have the following functions—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaana—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Saman—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5).

Location of the five chief vital winds, called the ‘Panch Prans’, in the body—(1) Pran—it is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg; (2) Apaana—it is present in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees; (3) Saman—it is uniformly present throughout the body; (4) Udaana—it is present in the hands, legs, joints of the body; and (5) Vyan—it is located in the ears, thighs, waist, heels, shoulders, throat.

Besides the Upanishad mentioned above, there are others that elaborately describe the vital winds and their significance, and the chief amongst them are (1) Chandogya Upanishad in its canto 3, sections 13-18, and canto 7, section 15, (2) Jabal Darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.23-24 of the Sam Veda tradition, (3) Maitrayanu Upanishad, canto 2, verse no.7 of the same Veda (which describes the functions of these winds), and (4) Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. These vital winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas’ Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.]

9. In a similar fashion, he divided those parts that had the ‘Sata’ quality (which is the best form of virtue present in a creature) in predominance into four parts. Out of these, he used three to create the ‘Anthakaran’ (the inner self) having five dimensions¹ and the last, i.e. the fourth part, to create the organs of perceptions (such as the eye, ear, tongue, nose and skin corresponding to the senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch respectively) (9).

[Note—¹The *Anthakaran* has five dimensions. These are the following—(a) Praman—knowledge that helps to establish the truth; (b) Viparyaya—ignorance, delusions, illusions such as imagining a snake in a piece of rope; this is erroneous knowledge; (c) Vikalp—alternatives; that knowledge which is acquired by hearing of it but may not present the correct picture, such as for example a wooden puppet—there seems an apparent difference between plain wood and the puppet, but they are basically the same and defined with the same word ‘wood’; this knowledge is neither is true nor false for to say that the puppet is different from an ordinary piece of wood because of its distinctive shape and value would be as much true as saying that it is

plain wood; (d) Nidra—meaning sleep; when a man remains oblivious of any truth just like anything gets hidden in darkness though it is very much there, that man is likened to a man sleeping soundly inspite of the goings on around him and therefore remaining unaware of them; and (e) Smriti—literally meaning memory; it refers to that knowledge which is based on experience and witnessing so that it is etched in memory; such knowledge becomes robust and gets soundly established in mind with the passage of time.

But according to this Upanishad's canto 2, verse no. 3, the Anthakaran has the following dimensions-- Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (the faculty of concentration and memory; knowledge and consciousness), Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) and their attendant Vrittis (inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body).]

10. From the totality of all the qualities present in creation he created the different Gods who would be the patron deities of the respective five organs of the body created earlier and responsible for their proper functioning. These Gods were symbolically established in the different worlds to look after their respective realms. [For example, the patron God of sight was Sun and he provided the light to the realm so that the creature can see no matter where it lives. He enabled the faculty of sight to function properly. He symbolically took up residence in the eye of the individual creature as well as in the heaven as Aditya. The eye, in this instance, is the subtle abode of Aditya, while the heaven (sky) is his gross and visible abode. This applies to all the other Gods.]

Therefore, all the Gods took up residence in the various worlds or 'Brahmands' on the orders of Vishnu (the Viraat Purush who represented Brahm and was Brahm personified). [In other words, these Gods are universally present everywhere where there is a living creature. For example, the Sun God is present everywhere where there is a creature who has eyes and who sees. Or, the Sun can be worshipped symbolically in the faculty of sight where he has his permanent residence in a subtle and invisible form even as he is present in the sky in a visible form.]

Upon the instructions of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Viraat Purush (Vishnu) began to take care of the entire gross form of creation. Since this Viraat was empowered with the authority to assign the Gods their respective places and took up the mantle of taking care of the world created by Brahm as Ishwar, he was obviously proud of it. This factor of 'pride', called Ahankar, became an integral part of character; it was his attribute. While Viraat (Vishnu) started looking after the gross form of creation, the Hiranyagarbha started taking care of the subtle form this world upon the instructions of the supreme Lord (10).

[Note— Refer Aitereiyo Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition which describes the genesis of creation in almost similar detail. According to it, the fire element became the patron God of speech, wind/air of smell, the sun of sight, the directions of hearing, the moon of heart and mind, the element of death and decay as that of the vital wind called Apaana which passes down the intestines and out through the anus, and water as the patron deity of semen (Aitereiyo Upanishad, 1/2/4).

According to the philosophy of Vedanta, this Viraat Purush represents the sum total of all the gross bodies of all creatures in the creation, while Hiranyagarbha represents their subtle bodies. In other words, the gross body of the creature consisting of the five organs of perception and five organs of actions are the responsibilities of Vishnu. A man does everything in this gross world with his gross body—great successes and achievements are accomplished by him with this body; he is 'proud' of his bodily strength and its beauty and handsomeness. Mere thinking of great successes by the mind and intellect would never materialize if no action is taken

by the body to implement the ideas of the mind-intellect. If the body decides so, it can even defy the advice given by the mind-intellect. That is why the gross body is considered haughty and arrogant, i.e. have Ahankar. So there is no wonder that Vishnu, who is this gross body of the world personified, is marked by the attribute of Ahankar or ego and pride.

On the other hand, Hiranyagarbha represents the subtle body—which is the mind and intellect complex. But as is obvious, the subtle body is effective only when the gross body plays along with it as described in the above paragraph. But it must be remembered here that in the process of creation, the Viraat Purush or Vishnu was created from Hiranyagarbha, and not vice-versa. This implies that this Ahankar has its genesis in the subtle body, i.e. in the mind. In other words, if the mind decides so, there would be no Ahankar, and in such a situation the gross body would be endowed with the majesty and noble virtues represented by the mind-intellect complex, i.e. the creature would be humble and pious, kind and considerate, temperate and accommodating, gracious and merciful instead of recklessly bulldozing his way through the world even at the inconvenience of other creatures.]

11. All those Gods who were established in the different worlds could not show any vital signs that could be indicative of life (such as presence of movement in the air/wind element, energy in the fire element, smell and vibrancy in the earth element, ripples and vibrations of the waves in the water element, and the presence of sound waves in the sky element). That is, they remained disempowered, disabled, lifeless, impotent and inert.

Then realising this dilemma that inspite of having everything in place there was still no signs of life, the Supreme Being (Brahm) made efforts to make them conscious and alive. He decided to infuse life into them, or make them conscious. With this thought and decision, he pierced the universe/creation at its top (i.e. at its tip), called the 'Brahm Randhra' which means the hair-like slit made or purposely punctured by Brahm himself, and he entered the creation himself through this slit or hole. This point is present in the top of the skull of the creature, and it was this point from which Brahm found its residence in the individual creature. [Refer also to Aiteriyo Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 3, verse no. 12 which says exactly the same thing.]

With this infusion of consciousness or life marked by the eclectic virtues of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, intelligence, knowledge and skills, they (the Gods representing the various organs as well as the manifested power, authority and potentials of Brahm) became active and exhibited all the signs of vibrant life though they were basically and primarily gross, lifeless, inert, impotent, and incapable of independent existence and activity, and were as good as being worthless and dead until the time Brahm injected the vital spark of intelligent consciousness in them (11).

[Note--It must be noted here that taken in a simple language this verse means that the individual creature represents the entire creation in a miniature form; it is a replica of the cosmos. All the Gods who took up residences in various worlds were symbolically present in his own individual organs which were like those abodes or worlds at the cosmic level. This creature laid lifeless inspite of the presence of the Gods—in other words, these Gods had no independent powers to do anything on their own. This observation itself should make it clear that whatever power and Anankar—pride and ego that Vishnu had of his own abilities came to a naught when the push virtually came to a shove; he could not make the creature alive and inject 'life' in; he could not make the creature see, smell, taste, hear or speak anything. So Brahm trounced the sense of pride and haughtiness of all the Gods in one stroke. That they did not realise the import of this is because they were mired by Maya, the deluding powers of Brahm, which virtually keeps the entire creation numbed towards the

reality. Why? Because had everyone become self-realised, wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened, there would be no cause for strife and war, there would be no hatred and animosity, no jealousy and ill-will in this world, there would be no desire to produce and re-produce, there would be no desire to create wealth and newer forms of assets, there would be no material development and no worldly progress, and instead all the creatures would become renunciates and monks—situations that the creator certainly would not approve of because had he wanted such a situation to prevail then he would not have taken the immense trouble to first create then enter this horrible creation himself through the Brahm Randhra as described in the Upanishad. He needn't have done anything at all.

There is another connotation to this verse. Brahm stands for 'truth and enlightenment', an intelligent thinking as opposed to emotional and impulsive behaviour. All living beings that came into existence have 'conscious life' in them in as much as they show some or the other sign that are characteristics of life in its myriad forms. But all forms of life cannot be treated as exalted and highly evolved because they lack the divine and eclectic virtues of having wisdom, erudition, sagacity and knowledge that enables them to think intelligently, rationally, logically and analytically; all forms of creatures cannot discriminate between what is spiritually acceptable and what is not, they cannot decide for themselves the path to choose which would help them break free from the cycle of birth and death. This privilege is the exclusive domain of the human being. That is why humans are placed at the top rung of the evolutionary ladder. This is also why it is said that the Viraat Purush had revealed himself in his image of the human body, that the human body is a replica of the Viraat Purush. Now if this is the case, then only those amongst the humans who possess the highest and noblest virtues of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, intelligence and the ability to discriminate between the bad and the good on the one hand, and the grand virtues of having compassion, love, kindness and mercy, of having total devotion, faith and dedication towards the Truth and following this Truth with whole hearted diligence, of sincerely endeavouring to break free from the shackle of ignorance and delusions that had been trapping their soul for generations after generations on the other hand, can be truthfully and honestly called manifestations of Brahm, or an image of the Viraat Purush. Brahm has revealed himself in all the creatures of this creation, but what sets the humans apart from the rest of the creatures is the possession of the grand and magnificent virtues of Brahm in their best of forms, in the best of their vibrancy, vigour and colour. The human being depicts the powers, potentials and authority of the supreme Lord in all its majestic and glorious form, and that is why the human being has been able to rule over the rest of the creation as its unquestioned master and lord.

This brings us to an interesting conclusion—if the human being is not able to display any of these noble, virtuous and divine qualities that he has inherited from Brahm as his image then there would be no difference between this human and the other creatures who are lower down in the evolutionary ladder. This is also why amongst the humans the Brahmins are regarded as the closest representatives of Brahm because they are deemed to possess the eclectic and holy virtues of Brahm in the highest ratio as compared to their other brethren. They have all the three Gunas in them, but the ratio of Sata Guna in them is higher than other two Gunas, making them as exalted, revered and honourable as Brahm. It does not imply that others are not images of Brahm, for there is nothing in creation that is not Brahm, but it is just that the degree and proportion of virtuous qualities that are hallmarks of Brahm are present in a greater proportion in Brahmins than other classes in society. All the creatures have their own individual place in creation, but even as all the subjects of a kingdom have their duties and position clearly marked out in order to maintain order and hierarchy, and all of them cannot claim to be called a 'king' and they cannot enjoy the same privileges as enjoyed by the king, all the other classes of the human race as well as the rest of the creatures cannot be treated alike.

Further, all creature have the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama in varying ratios, thereby establishing their relationship with Brahm, because the off spring acquires the genes of the parent. When all the three Gunas were present in equal proportion in Brahm, he was neutral, detached and did not depict any attributes as all the three Gunas cancelled each other out. The nearest analogy to visualise this is the ordinary sunlight—there are seven colours in it, but they cancel each other in such a way that we cannot discern them in their distinctive individual forms, but what we see is the colourless dazzling light of the sun. This divine and pious form of Brahm is revealed in the renunciate ascetics, hermits, monks, friars, sages and seers, and other enlightened and self-realised persons who are regarded even higher than the Brahmins because they depict the best of virtues of Brahm, and that is also why they are called ‘Brahm personified’. They represent Brahm’s best form in existence. But with the polarization of Brahm’s Gunas, the myriad creation and its inhabitant creatures came into being, each very different from the other and depicting Brahm’s various Gunas in varying stages of polarization.]

12. That all-knowing and omniscient Ishwar (the supreme Lord of creation) invoked his own stupendous powers that created illusions and delusions in this creation, called his ‘Maya’, which allowed him to assume any form that he wished, and in conjunction with it (or joining hands with his own Maya, or allowing himself to become veiled in his own delusions) he entered the body of the individual creature. He was so enamoured with his own creation, and especially when he allowed his Maya to accompany him, that the same cosmic Lord who is beyond comprehension of even the wisest of men and the reach of the holy scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Purans, became engulfed or surrounded by ‘Moha’ (worldly attractions, infatuations, attachments, endearments, longings, love and affections). With this twin fault—viz. Maya and Moha—that supreme Lord who has no attributes and names became a ‘worldly creature’. [That is, when Maya found out that it’s Lord is getting interested in and developing affection for what he has created, it went ahead to fulfill the wishes of its Lord like a faithful and obedient servant would. Maya went literally overboard to please the Lord, and knowing that he might balk and suffer from indecision as to whether or not to allow himself to plunge in the formidable web of creation that he plans to unfold (because Brahm was an enlightened Being, and he would soon realise his failings), Maya showed its sly hand and made him get infatuated and enamoured with the creation to such an extent that the Lord lost awareness of who is was, and consequently became engrossed in this world like a fish takes to water at the first opportunity. Say, if this can happen to the Ishwar whose Maya did not think twice in casting its evil spell upon its own Lord, how can an ordinary creature can ever expect to be free from its tentacles!]

Therefore, the supreme Ishwar, now manifested as a creature, the Jiva, began to treat himself as a doer of deeds and an enjoyer of or a sufferer from the consequences of those deeds because he became associated with the three types of bodies¹ that he had assumed in his form of a worldly creature.

When he got associated with the body having three divisions (gross, subtle and causal), he naturally lived through all the states through which these bodies pass during their sojourn in this mortal world—such as the waking state, the dreaming state, the deep sleep state, and the Turiya state of existence. Further, since he had assumed all the characteristics of a creature’s body, he assumed that he would die like an ordinary creature. Thus, the immortal Lord became mortal! [In other words, once Maya and Moha had their upper hands, the Lord of creation was misled to believe that he is an ordinary mortal being who has a mortal body, undergoes the three states of

existence so characteristic of the body, that he would die, and that he would enjoy or suffer the results of his deeds.]

As a result he went round and round like the bullock turning the water-wheel or the potter's wheel which goes on endlessly turning; he got trapped in this wheel of a continuous cycle of birth and death (12).

[Note—¹The *three types of bodies* of a creature are the following—the gross body having the various sense organs, the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect, and the causal body consisting of the Atma surrounded by the bliss sheath.]

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Canto 2

1. Sage Paingal once again asked sage Yagyavalkya, 'How does the Ishwar known as Vibho¹, i.e. the supreme transcendental Lord—who is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, who is beyond the purview of comprehension by the mind and intellect, who is most stupendous and magnificent, and who has created, who sustains and ultimately concludes the world—assumes the form of a creature? How does he become an ordinary creature? Please elaborate' (1).

[Note—¹The word *Vibho* is used to describe the supreme Lord of creation because the word has the following meaning—One who is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, all-pervading, eternal, almighty, majestic, magnanimous Lord of the creation.

Ishwar is honoured by epithets which highlight some or the other of his majestic glories. Some of them, inter alia, are the following—Satya (truth), Shiva (auspicious), Sundar (beauty); Satt (eternal), Chitt (consciousness; knowledge), Anand (beatitude and felicity); Akshar (imperishable; the eternal ethereal word), Uttam (the best, the most exalted, the ultimate), Purush (the primary Male Spirit; the supreme Spirit), Parmatma (the supreme Soul of creation), Prakriti (primary Nature), Purshottam (the best Purush; the most exalted holy spirit), Pragma (conscious, knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment and erudition), besides Vibho as described above.]

2. Sage Yagyavalkya replied, 'Listen attentively and carefully. I shall endeavour to describe to you the details about the origin of the three types of bodies called the gross, the subtle and the causal in which the Lord revealed himself, along with the fundamental nature and form of or the difference between a creature and the Ishwar. This would help you to understand the relationship between the creature or Jiva, and the supreme Lord of that creature known as Ishwar.

The supreme creator or Lord called 'Isha' took fractions of the five primary elements (i.e. sky, air, water, fire and earth) that he had created first to create the gross bodies of the individual creature as well as the gross body of the entire creation¹. [In other words, the same ingredients were used by him to mould the individual creature's body as well as the rest of the creation. This observation has a great import—although no two creatures are alike, and though the external form and shape and size and colour and contour of any two individual creatures might be different, but they are fundamentally the same. When it is extended to the rest of the creation, then the notion of non-duality, uniformity and universality in creation is easy to understand.]

The 'earth' element was used to create the skull, skin, intestines, bones, flesh and nails. From the 'water' element he created blood, urine, saliva and sweat etc. From the 'fire' element he produced hunger, thirst, heat, infatuations, passions, lust and sexual instincts etc. From the 'wind or air' element he crafted the virtue of 'motion and activity' such as walking, sitting, getting up, going places, breathing,

speaking etc. And from the 'sky' element were produced such traits as Kaam (worldly desires, passions, yearnings etc.) and Krodh (anger, vehemence, wrathfulness, short temper etc.).

The gross body so produced from these fundamental primary elements naturally had all the traits that were inherently present as an integral part and defining attributes of these individual elements. Therefore, the body of the creature exhibited all the attributes and characteristics present in the ingredients used to make up its body. The body that the creature assumed further depended upon the cumulative effects of the deeds which the creature had done in the past². Since the body took a birth in as much it had 'come into being' and was 'not eternal and without a birth', it had to pass through various stages of change and development (i.e. evolution) such as childhood, etc., and had to suffer from their accompanying sufferings (2).

[Note—¹By saying that Brahm had created the five basic elements and subtly entered them to empower them with their characteristic qualities it is meant that these elements were bestowed with some fundamental qualities which were deemed most essential and necessary to conceive and implement, then develop, nourish and sustain, and finally close the process of creation as envisioned by Brahm. It was like a delegation of his majestic powers by Brahm, thereby vesting these entities with those powers and necessary authority that were deemed absolutely essential to implement the Lord's ideas of creation.

Thus, the 'earth' was given the virtue of fertility and assigned with the task of providing nourishment and sustenance to the creation as well as to act as a base and foundation for all the forthcoming creation; it was vested with a vast and inexhaustible reservoir of natural resources so as to provide the creation with the necessities of daily life in abundance. The 'water' was vested with the power of digesting and then equally distributing nourishment to all the parts of creation; of providing the vital sap and nectar for fostering life. The 'fire' element obviously was assigned the task of giving required energy, heat and light. The 'air or wind' element provided the breathing and the gases needed for life; it helped in movement and carrying of information as sound waves. The 'sky' element acted as the great cosmic womb in which the entire creation would be conceived, live and finally find its rest.

To ensure that none of these elements got the better of the other, the cosmic creator ensured a fine balance by neutralizing one with the other. For example, 'fire' had its antidote in water and air (because no matter how fierce the fire is, it can be doused by water and blown away by wind); the 'water' element had its antidote in fire and earth (because the fire can evaporate water and make it vanish, while the water vanishes in the bowl of the earth in a desert); the 'air or wind' had its nemesis in the fire and sky (because even though the air is static it is forced to move when heated, and the strongest of storms vanish in the endless bowls of the sky); the 'earth' element has found its balancing factor in the sky, water and fire elements (because at the end of its tenure the earth would disintegrate and vanish in the sky, the earth is but a tiny dot in the deep dark recesses of the cosmos; at the time of the great dooms-day deluge the earth would be submerged in water, and the fire can scorch earth and render it un-inhabitable); and finally the 'sky' also has its antidote in the rest of the four elements (because the sky symbolising space cannot and does not exist in solid rocks or earth, a block of ice or water, in a fierce fire because that fire occupies all space to burn and would chase away every trace of air inside it, and inside specific gases which are forms of air).

Refer also to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 1/1-9, 2/1-19, and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 1 which appear as Chapters 9 and 2 respectively of this volume.

²This again assumes that the creature was ignorant of its exalted pure form and essential nature as the eternal Atma which resided in its earlier body, that this Atma was neutral and was not at all involved in doing any deed, so there was no question of it getting involved in deeds and then having to assume a body depending upon what it

did in its previous life. Herein lay the secret that the Upanishads try to unravel. That creature's Atma had erroneously presumed that the body in which it resided at that time was its identity, it was recognised by the body, it got too enamoured with its deeds and wanted to enjoy them and their results because it found them enticing. This led to its downfall even as the supreme transcendental Brahm had himself been taken for a ride when he became infatuated with the world he had created as has been clearly stated in canto 1, verse nos. 7-12 and explained as notes appended therewith. So if the worldly engrossments did not spare the creator, then how can it spare an ordinary creature? Further, since the individual creature is an image of the creator or Brahm himself, by explaining the concept with the help of the creature, the Upanishadic seer seeks to explain the large picture at the cosmic level.]

3. After that, the supreme creator collected those parts of the individual elements which had the 'Raja Guna' (the second of the three fundamental qualities that are inherently present in the entire creation and determine its characters and specific nature) in predominance. This he divided into four segments, and took three of these to create 'Pran' (the vital winds). These are five in number—viz. Pran, Apan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan. Similarly, the sub-Prans are called Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay.

The main or chief Pran (breath or the life infusing vital wind) has its seat in the following sites—heart, lower buttocks (in the Muladhar Chakra which is a subtle energy centre present at the lower end of the body near the anus and genitals), navel (abdomen), throat and other parts of the body.

Thereafter, he used the remaining fourth part to create the various organs of action (mouth, hands, legs, and the excretory and procreative organs). These five organs have as their functions the following—speech (is the function of mouth), receiving (is the function of hands), movement (is the function of legs), excretion (is the function of the excretory organs such as anus and kidneys), and enjoyments of pleasure (is the function of the sexual organs).

Similarly, he collected those parts of the individual elements which had the 'Sata Guna' (the first of the three fundamental qualities) in predominance. This he divided into four segments, and took three of these to create 'Anthakaran'¹ (the inner self; the subtle body). It had the following components—Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (the faculty of concentration, paying attention and memory; knowledge and sub-conscious), Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) and their attendant Vrittis (inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body). [That is, the basic nature of a person and the way he would react to a given circumstance, the way he would deal, behave and interact with the world, the way he would interpret things, the way he thinks, the things that would appeal to him and the things he would abhor, etc.—that is, the overall personality of the creature, all depend upon the mental setup tinged with the fundamental character traits that are firmly ingrained in him.]

These components that formed the subtle body had the following characteristic objects that they pursue—Sankalps (making vows promises, having volitions, aspirations and firm determinations etc.—this was the function of the Mana), Nishya (to have predetermined conceptions about anything or situation-- this was the exclusive job of Vrittis), Smaran (to remember and recollect—this was the function of the Chitta), Abhiman (to have pride and arrogance, to be haughty and hypocrite—this was the exceptional domain of Ahankar), and Anusandhaan (research and analysis, quest and enquiry, to determine and arrive at conclusions, to debate and research, to discuss and deduce—this was the function of the Buddhi).

These entities have their seats in the throat, mouth, navel, heart and the mid-point between the two eyebrows. [It is obvious how it happens. A man uses his mouth to express his mind, his thoughts as well as to show off his ego and pride. Throat and mouth are equally important for the purpose of speaking and gloating over one's acquisitions and successes. The heart is emotional, and its involvement makes a man passionate about his ideas. The navel is the center from where all the Naadis (nerves) fan out in the body, enabling the creature to remain sensitive, alert and active. The center of the eyebrow is the location of the intellect or Buddhi. This Buddhi stands for rational and intelligent thinking, as opposed to impulsive and sentimental responses of the heart. In other words, all the crucial subtle virtues that were manifestations of the Sata Guna in its various levels of subtlety had their symbolic locations at these five points in the body.]

The Lord used the remaining fourth part of the 'Sata-Guna' dominant elements to create the organs of perceptions—such as the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. The respective functions are—hearing, touching and feeling, seeing, tasting and smelling.

The following are the chief patron Gods or deities of all these organs—the presiding deities of the various directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Arka (the Water God), Pracheta (one of the ancient Prajapatis, the care-takers of the creation according to the Purans), Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God and the medicine men of the Gods), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (the junior Gods who help Indra to carry on his functions), Mritu (the death God or Yam), Chandra (the Moon God), Vishnu (the sustainer), the four-headed Lord (Brahma the creator), and Shiva (the concluder of creation). [It should be noted that how Brahm utilised the third quality of Tama Guna has already been described in Canto 1, verse no. 7 of this Upanishad.] (3).

[Note—¹According to canto 1, verse no. 9 of this Paingalo-panishad, the *Anthakaran* has five dimensions. Please refer to the above verse no. 9 and its accompanying note in the previous canto.]

4. After that, the five sheaths or 'Koshas'¹ were created. These are the following—'Annamaye Kosh' or the food sheath, 'Pranmaye Kosh' or the vital wind sheath, 'Manomaye Kosh' or the mental sheath, 'Vigyanmaye Kosh' or the intellect sheath, and 'Anandmaye Kosh' or the bliss sheath. [These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object.]

The Annamaye Kosh is that which was created by the intake of food, was nourished and developed by food, and at the end it finally disintegrates into the basic ingredients that constitutes food and merges with the earth element from where the food has derived its original ingredients. This forms the gross body of the creature.

The Pranmaye Kosh consists of the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaan, and Samaan) along with the five organs of actions (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive).

The Manomaye Kosh consists of the mind and the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), while the Vigyanmaye Kosh consists of the combined apparatus made of the intellect and these five organs of perceptions.

A combination of these three sheaths, i.e. Pranmaye Kosh (vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mental sheath) and Vigyanmaye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is what is known as the 'Ling Deha' of a creature, or the ethereal form of the corporeal body. This is the subtle body of the creature.

The sheath in which the pure conscious self is not aware of the 'Ling Deha' is called Anandmaye Kosh. This forms the causal body of the creature (4).

[Note-- ¹These *five sheaths* are called the 'Panch Kosha'.

The Atma, which is the truthful identity of the creature, lives in a body consisting of various sheaths, called 'Koshas', as mentioned above. Like the crystal, the attributeless, neutral, featureless, untainted and immaculate Atma acquires the various attributes and qualities of these sheaths that surround it, because of the fact that the Atma lives in a body consisting of these sheaths, and it cannot remain indifferent to being effected by their individual characteristics and virtues, whether good or bad. Consequentially, the pristine pure Atma appears to have all these taints and scars that these sheaths possess.

The Atma is the pure-self, the pure consciousness which is a microscopic reflection of the vast macrocosmic Soul of the cosmos called Brahm. The Atma provides life or consciousness to the inert layers of matter consisting of the five elements of air, water, space, fire and earth which crystalise to form the five coverings or sheaths around the pure Atma, and together (the Atma and the five sheaths) they create what we call the 'living being', whether plant, animal or humans.

The Food Sheath :- Is the physical body and derives its name because it is nourished by the food eaten by the creature. It consists of five organs of perception (eyes, ears, tongue, nose, skin) and five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, genitals and anus).

The Vital Air Sheath :- Is the five-fold faculties of perception (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching), excretion (faeces, urine, sperm, sputum, sweat etc.), digestion (stomach, intestine, liver, pancreas, gall bladder, appendix), circulation (blood stream, artery, vein, capillary, heart) and thinking (the power to entertain, absorb and assimilate new information and thought).

The Mental Sheath :- It consists of the equipment which receives external stimuli through the sense organs and links it to the organs of action. Integrated response of body to the stimuli is done through the mind sheath. It is a continuous flow of thoughts. Because the mind is characterised by being in a state of flux, the mind (mental sheath), which is like a clerk, receives information (as stimuli) from the organs of perception and dispatches them to either the organs of action or the intellect when certain situations demand intelligent thinking and discrimination. Therefore, the mental sheath controls the vital air sheath and the food sheath.

The Intellect Sheath :- It acts as a controlling mechanism over the mind; It regulates, filters and modifies the response to the various stimuli. It has the discriminatory power which the mind, left alone to its own self, lacks.

The intellect sheath is the chief of the whole setup—in fact it controls the mind sheath, and through it, the functioning of the creature. It is the task master that directs the reckless horde of school boys running amok hither and thither, as it were. Those boys who obey this teacher become civilised and educated, while the rest of the bunch remains buffoons or ruffians. The intellect can distinguish between the good and the bad, which the mental sheath cannot. The intellect can see beyond the realm of the known while the mind cannot. The intellect sheath is the spring board for all ideas and ideologies. The intellect helps to stabilise and channelise the mind even as the dam controls the river and harnesses its immense energy to produce powerful electricity.

These two sheaths—the mind and the intellect—are called the subtle sheaths or bodies. They have no physical structure in conventional terms like the gross or physical body called the food sheath or Anna Maya Kosh (consisting of the organs of perception and organs of action) as well as the air sheath (called the Pran Maya Kosh) of the creature. This subtle sheath has only functional aspect. The mental and intellect sheaths are like software of a computer vis-à-vis the food and vital sheaths which resemble the hardware paraphernalia of the entire system. The word ‘Pran’ refers broadly to the vibrations of life present in a creature; it pertains to the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life

The Bliss Sheath :- Is the innermost sheath surrounding the Atma/the soul. It consists of ‘inherent tendencies’ or ‘Vasanas’ and ‘Vrittis’ before they are manifested into thoughts or actions. The intellect, mind etc. perform under the guidance and control of the bliss sheath. It is so-called because an individual experiences relative bliss, happiness, joy, contentedness, peace and tranquility when he is associated with it.

In the waking and dream states, a man experiences constant agitation of the mind, but once he reaches the realm of deep sleep state (bliss sheaths), he feels undisturbed, tranquil, peaceful and full of bliss. All agitations cease here. It is a relative experience vis-à-vis the other sheaths. This sheath is also called the ‘causal body’ of the creature.

The five sheaths are all inane, inert and inactive, and constitute of matter. This together forms the personality of the Jiva. He is conscious of all that is happening around him but these 5 sheaths are inert themselves. So, naturally, there must be something distinct and separate from these sheaths that lend the Jiva the so-called life or consciousness. That factor which lends life or consciousness to the Jiva is called Atma, pure consciousness or the pure self of the creature. It is also the true identity or self of the Jiva.

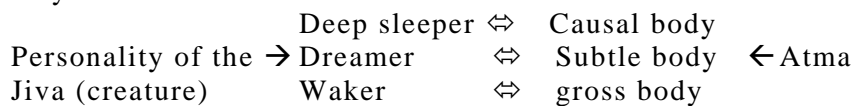


Diagram showing interaction between the Jiva and the Atma.]

5. In the aforesaid manner, the five organs of perceptions (eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of actions (hand, leg, mouth, genital and excretory), the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Samaan and Udaan), the five principal elements (earth, water, fire, air and sky), the four Anthakarans (see verse no.3), the four faults consisting of Kaam (worldly passions and lust for self gratification) etc. (the other faults being Krodh or anger, Lobh or greed, and Moha or attractions), Karma (deeds) and Tama (lack of truthful knowledge symbolised by darkness) make up the body called a ‘Puryashtak’ or a cluster of eight abodes or cities. (5).

[Note--The body of a creature consists of these twenty eight fundamental units which are separate in themselves but are clubbed together to form a combined structure called the body of the creature that harbours the Atma or the pure conscious self of the creature in it. The creature lives in a ‘state’ or a country consisting of eight symbolic cities; the body of the creature is like a confederation of eight independent city-states that have a mutual understanding of cooperation with a segregation of responsibilities depending upon the competence of a particular unit to handle a job more efficiently. These eight cities are symbolised by the organs of perception + organs of action + vital winds + primary elements + Antahakaran + Kaam + Krodh + Tama = total of 8 cities. The cluster of individual components in each grouping, such as five units that compositely form the organs of action, can be likened to satellite

townships or boroughs or shires that form independent administrative units of any large city but are invariably part and parcel of the same city.]

6. On the instructions of the supreme transcendental Lord (Ishwar), the Viraat Purush subtly entered the individual creature and established himself in his Buddhi (intellect; discriminatory and reasoning faculty). With this status, the Viraat acquired the designation or epithet which would henceforth make him known as 'Vishwa'¹.

This 'Vishwa' (i.e. the cosmic Purush or the macrocosmic Lord of creation who represents the vast, all-inclusive body of Brahm at the cosmic level, and who has now taken up residence in the body of the individual creature which forms the basic unit of this mortal, visible world) has many names signifying the special qualities that it possesses. These names are the following--Vigyan-atma (the intelligent, wise, omniscient and enlightened soul), Chidabhas (the one who appears as the pure consciousness), Vishwa (visible world), Byavahaarik (one which interacts with the physical world), Jagrat (one who is awake in this visible world and sees it in actual practice), Sthul Dehabhimani (one who is proud of his gross body, though this is out of ignorance of his true identity which is the subtle and sublime Atma), and Karma-bhu (one who is engrossed in doing deeds on this earth)². (6).

[Note--¹The word *Vishwa* literally means the world at large; hence when the Viraat Purush metamorphosed into a creature, it was not that he was only limited to a single creature, but all the creatures in this creation had this Viraat element in them. So, 'Vishwa' form of Viraat Purush was the microcosmic profile of the macrocosmic entity that formed the gross body of the entire creation. It must be noted here that the word 'Vishwa' referring to the 'entire world' is actually meant to refer to the world inhabited by living beings of the earth and the Gods they praise. It does not include the entire universe, because the universe has an unimaginable dimension and is much, much vaster than the world in which we are immediately concerned. Therefore, the supreme entity which related to the gross and material world where living beings lived was called Vishwa, whereas the same entity when it related to the cosmos at large was called Viraat, meaning vast, colossus and immeasurable.

²We will note here that all these are the characteristic features of all mortal creatures that live on this earth. All have a mind no matter in which state of development it is, all have life and consciousness, all live in this visible world and interact with it, all are awake when they interact with the world, for otherwise they would be either asleep or dead, all are proud of themselves and their bodies for they love their bodies more than anything else, and all do some or the other kind of deed.]

7. On the instructions of the supreme Lord (Ishwar), the cosmic 'Sutra Atma' (the essential micro fine and microscopic entity that is the cosmic soul of the creation) entered the individual creature's subtle body, and took up residence in its Mana (the subtle mind and heart complex). With this status, the Sutra Atma acquired the designation or epithet of being called 'Taijas'¹.

This Taijas (i.e. the subtle body of the Atma of the creature) has the following names (which symbolise its chief characteristics)—Taijas (one that has energy and vive, vigour and potentials, strength and vitality, glory and radiance), Pratibhasik (that which reflects the glory, majesty, potentials, authority and magnificence of the principal) and Swakalpita (self created and imaginary)² (7).

[Note--¹The word *Taijas* refers to the fundamental energy, powers, glory, authority, vigour, strength and potentials that a creature possesses which empowers it to have its importance and relevance in this world. The Taijas is the subtle body where the mind is located. The mind and intellect apparatus is the most important instrument in the body of the creature because it is the mind and intellect that

determines the basic thoughts and responses of the creature, which in turn determines the value that the individual has for the society. A stupid man is good for nothing and has no productive use. The mind and intellect literally ‘powers and energises’ the machine known as the creature, for it is the wisdom and intelligence that a man possesses which make him honourable and praiseworthy; it is the mind that drives the body and enables the creature to perform constructive activity. Even animals live and reproduce, but the man can think intelligently and is therefore considered more evolved in the evolutionary ladder. It is indeed the mind and the intellect that distinguishes an intelligent, thoughtful, learned, wise and skillful man from the blockheads and good-for-nothings. So the word ‘Taijas’, implying dynamism, glory and majesty, is most apt for the subtle body which houses the mind and intellect of the creature.

²The *mind and intellect* shows these virtues in abundance. Taijas has been described above. A wise and intelligent person’s fame and good name is established everywhere. The mind and intellect help a man acquire fame, glory, authority and majesty; they help him to gain honour and praise so much so that while he is alive, people seek him, and when he dies he is remembered for his prudent words, his erudition, his wisdom and his intelligence. This is his Pratistha.

Similarly, this world is a conception of the mind; it is an imagination of the mind. If the mind so decides, the very existence of the materialistic world would vanish, for the Upanishads have categorically stated in unambiguous terms that the mind is the cause of the ‘illusionary and deluding’ world. The latter is illusionary because it is like the water in a mirage in a hot desert; everyone knows that the water is not there but still a thirsty man is so much deluded by what he sees that he allows himself to run for it and eventually die due to exhaustion and dehydration. That is why those who are self-realised and Brahm-realised, those who know the secret truth behind the misleading external façade, treat this world as ‘non-existent’ even though they live a normal life in it and interact with it normally, but internally they remain non-involved and non-interested in it. Hence, the subtle body is given the epithet of ‘Swakalpit’, i.e. one that creates something out of its own free will.]

8. Under the instructions of the supreme transcendental Lord (Isha), the entity which was characterised by such divine and glorious virtues as being without any attributes, being indescribable, un-manifest and invisible—or was ‘Abyakta’, assumed for itself the attributes of Maya (i.e. invoked for itself the powers to create delusions and assume any form it wants) and entered the causal body of the individual creature, whereupon it came to be known as ‘Pragya’¹.

The other names of this entity which symbolically described some or the other attributes of it are the following—Pragya (something that is aware, wise, enlightened, erudite and sagacious), Avichinna (immutable, indivisible, eternal, unfractionable, one single whole, holistic), Parmarthik (spiritually inclined, divine, holy, pious, sublime and ethereal), and Sushpta-Abhimani (one who is in a blissful state and is proud of his blissfulness)² (8).

[Note--¹*Pragya* literally means something that is aware, knowledgeable, wise, enlightened, expert, skilled, erudite, sagacious and intelligent. The pure consciousness residing in the causal body of the creature has all these attributes; hence the supreme Brahm who lives in the causal body is called by this name of Pragya. In other words, this pure conscious Atma is the micro level counter part of Brahm, and therefore it reflects all the characteristic features possessed by Brahm—with the only difference that it is trapped in the body of the individual creature, whereas Brahm is present in the entire cosmos, uniformly defused throughout it. Why is Brahm trapped as the Atma in the causal body? This is explained in this verse which states that the supreme Lord entered the individual creature and took up

residence in its causal body, and he was known as Pragya thereafter. The word 'causal' itself means something that is the cause of anything; it derives its name because of the fact that the Atma resides in its inner chambers, and this Atma is the supreme Brahm personified, and Brahm is the cause of all that exists!

It should be noted that in Canto 1, verse no. 11, 2nd last stanza, it was said that Brahm entered the body through the Brahm Randhra on the top of the head, whereas in the present verse it is said he entered the causal body. It implies that anything that is the 'cause' of any other thing to happen resides in the causal body. Since the mind (Mana) is the 'cause' of coming into being of the entire world, it is surely the abode of Brahm, and it is also correct to call it the 'causal body of Brahm'.

²The Atma resides in the *causal body* of the creature. This body at the micro level is called Pragya because the Atma is wise, enlightened and erudite. At the macro level, the same entity is called Brahm, and the causal body is then known as Ishwar. The words used as epithets for this entity describe its characteristics.]

9. Even a spiritually inclined creature is covered by a veil of ignorance created by Maya (because of reasons cited in verse no. 8 above). This veil is called 'Agyan' or ignorance about the truth. Ironically, this is also one of the attributes of Brahm; it is also one of the myriad forms that Brahm assumes, because everything, including the negative traits and deluding aspects of creation, have their origin in Brahm; it is Brahm in all forms.

From the great sayings, the axioms and maxims of the scriptures called the 'Mahavakyas', such as the one that says 'Tattwamasi' (i.e. that is you), the oneness, universality and uniformity of the immutable and immaculate Brahm is established, but in practice and behavioural world the opposite situation prevails. This dichotomy is due to the interference of Maya and its accompanying Agyan (i.e. delusion and ignorance) (9).

[Note--Though the ultimate truth is one single indivisible reality, we see different aspects of it in this visible world which makes it difficult to believe that the Truth is one, indivisible, immutable and non-dual. For example, it is difficult to reconcile that one's self is the same as the person standing in front. But again this is due to the deluding effects of Maya which has cast a veil of ignorance upon the creature—he forgets that though the exterior may appear to be different but the fundamental entity in the two persons--which is the truthful identity of them--is not their exterior gross bodies nor their subtle bodies, but their Atma residing in their causal bodies. And this Atma is universal and uniform; it is the same everywhere in all the creatures. So, with this erudition one comes to realise that what the Mahavakyas speak is indeed the truth.]

10. In fact, the pure conscious entity that is reflected and experienced in one's inner self is the one that enjoys the three states of existence in which the creature lives in this world. [These three states of existences are the waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep state.] Though the pure conscious is basically wise and enlightened, but when it comes under the influence of ignorance (Avidya) and delusions (Maya), it begins to think that it is the one for whom the three states of existence are meant; it is the one who is supposed to enjoy or suffer from them. This leads it to get involved and engrossed in the deluding and illusionary world to which these three states pertain, thereby getting trapped in their snare. It gets into a situation like a bullock that is yoked to a water wheel and goes round and round endlessly turning the wheel without finding any rest whatsoever. The Atma also remains restless and agitated once it gets trapped in this endless cycle of birth and death due to

it getting involved in doing deeds in these three states in which it has falsely allowed itself to get trapped (10).

11. [The five states of existence are being described now in the following verses--]

There are five states of existence of a creature—viz. Jagrat (waking), Swapna (dreaming), Sushupta (deep sleep), Murchha (trance like or comatose), and Maran (death).

The first state called Jagrat or the waking state of existence is that in which the ears and other organs of perceptions (nose, eyes, tongue and skin) are activated and empowered by their respective patron Gods, and they accept the various stimuli from the external world that are relevant to each one of them (e.g. ears receive the stimuli of sound waves as the sense of hearing; the eyes see the things that are illuminated by light and create images that can be picked up by the eye; the nose picks up the different aroma and odors that stimulate the sense of smell; the tongue similarly carries on the perception of taste; and the skin harbours the sense of touch).

In this state, the creature lives in the material world of sense objects that is gross and which relates to the gross aspects of his body represented by the various sense organs extending from his legs right up to his head as described above.

The creature receives the impulses or inputs from the world through the medium of the various sense organs, and he becomes aware of them because of the mind that is present in the region behind the mid-point of the eyebrows. [This is the exact location of the brain in the body.] He does all physical labour and performs all activities with his body, such as tilling his fields as a farmer if he is not competent to study in a formal school or college, or listening to the scriptures by his ears if he is a student or a wise man. He also receives or enjoys the fruits or rewards of his deeds, and suffers equally from them. These deeds and their cumulative effects, good or bad, are suffered by the creature not only in this life but even in the after-life.

Like a monarch who has gone on a trip outside to the far reaches of his realm and takes a temporary halt to relax before he comes back to his palace for permanent rest, that creature's true self, the Atma, wishes to take some rest when it gets tired of its journey and wants to get back to its inner chamber to find permanent rest in the form of peace and bliss. At that time, the creature withdraws itself (i.e. its sense organs) from remaining active and busy with this world, and goes to sleep instead to take temporary rest and find temporary peace. [That is why when a man is under pain or stress, doctors advise him to sleep.] (11).

[Note—The different state of existence have been beautifully described in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Chapter 2 of this volume, in 2/1/15-20; 4/3/9-38.]

12. When the organs of perceptions and actions withdraw from their respective activities, when the creature stops to act like a 'customer' of any object or thing 'offered' to it by the external world (in the form of enchanting perceptions that entice the sense organs of perceptions to remain hooked and engrossed in this world, and the enjoyment and pleasure that is derived by doing various deeds by the organs of actions), it is then it is said to be in a state of sleep called 'dreaming'. In this state, when the pure consciousness need not interact with the world through the gross body, the world virtually exists for it in the 'Naadis' (the ducts or channels in the body, such as the veins and nerves) through which it keeps dreaming of the same experiences. These Naadis keep the subtle body alive and active (i.e. though the man is sleeping, his mind forming the subtle body is very much active). The state in which the pure conscious Atma exists during the sleeping state of dreams is called 'Taijas', because it

showcases the stupendous powers, potentials and authority of the mind to conjure up a virtual-world which is almost similar to the actual world in which the Atma was living when it was in the waking state of existence. The only difference being that now that world exists only in the mind, and the vital winds that had been activating the various sense organs of the body and keeping them in contact with the external world earlier in the waking state, are now moving through the various Naadis in the body and keep the mind and sub-conscious active.

[That is why, though the man looks apparently ‘dead’ while asleep because all his external organs are not functioning and he shows no signs of life, his nerves and veins are very much active and kicking, providing the necessary stimuli to the mind to help it to conjure up a ‘world of dreams’, thereby enabling the Atma to ‘live in the world of dreams’. The pure conscious Atma of the creature, it would be observed, sees the world at two levels or planes—one is through the gross body during the waking state, and the other is through the subtle body during the dreaming state. The mind plays a central, active and important role in both the cases. During the waking state, the conscious part of the mind is active, receiving inputs from the external world, analyzing them, ordering the organs of action to respond, and storing data for future referral. During the dreaming state, the mind’s sub-conscious part takes over and becomes a dominant factor. Since the mind does not find any rest in both the cases, and it does not let the Atma rest too for it constantly bombards the latter with newer information and inputs, both of them become tired and weary. They do not find true rest, peace, bliss and happiness. For both of them, whether the body is wide awake or is sleeping makes no difference.]

The Atma is surrounded by a veil of Vasanas and Vrittis (i.e. the inherent tendencies and habits that it had inherited from its past and which shape its present passions, desires, inclinations and behaviours). These help the Atma to create its own imaginary world that it is fond of and that is in consonance with its desires and expectations. It then begins to enjoy this world in its dreams much in the same way as it was enjoying the physical world when awake. [This is possible in the dreaming state and not in the waking state because now the stupendous powers of the mind to imagine and create are free to have their run as there are no encumbrances or hurdles imposed upon it by the physical limitations of the gross body. For example, if the mind feels like flying, it can do so in the dream with the help of the various vital winds moving through the Naadis, while it is not possible to do so with the limitation of the gross body during the waking state.] (12).

13. The state of existence when the intellect is stable and uniform (i.e. when there is no distraction and agitation of any form) is like the ‘deep sleep state’ of existence when the man does not even dream and has no restlessness even in his dreams! [When he wakes up from this sleep, he is completely rested and refreshed.] Even as a bird that is tired of flying around heads towards its nest to take rest, and having reached there it folds up its wings to retire, the creature too, when it is tired and weary of the restlessness caused during its waking and dreaming states of existence, seeks rest, it retires to the state where there is no restlessness because there is no awareness or knowledge of the existence of the external world, nor the reception of any kind of stimuli that would disturb the peace of the mind and intellect and provoke it. This state is equivalent to being ignorant of any kind of happening that can disturb peace and equilibrium of the man, when he is blissfully at peace with himself. Thus, in this state the creature finds perpetual bliss which is devoid of any interfering annoyance

created by the various stimuli either from the physical world of the waking state, or the imaginary world of the dreaming state.

But it must be noted that this state is marked by ‘ignorance’ of the reality, ‘unawareness’ of the truth (13).

[Note--This would be clear when we take an example. Suppose a calamity has befallen a man’s family while he is away in some distant place. As long as he does not know of this event, he lives peacefully, but as soon as he becomes aware of it his life becomes miserable. He begins to imagine many things that might actually not have happened, because his mind begins to hallucinate, and this causes him greater distress. In the present verse, during the deep sleep state of consciousness, the mind is completely at rest—for neither does it receive any inputs from the external world as was the case during the waking state, nor any provocation from the world of dreams because the consciousness has withdrawn itself from both these stages. Taken in another way, the Atma no longer needs the help of the mind and intellect when it resides in the deep sleep state of consciousness. It remains oblivious of all happenings in the world around it; it remains truly ignorant of them; it remains innocent like a child. It therefore has no worries or pains. Hence, both the Atma and the mind find peace and rest in this state.]

14. Just like a man trembles and shivers when he is threatened by a stick or baton or club (for the fear of being thrashed), a person who suffers from the disease of faintness (e.g. epilepsy) also shivers and trembles during the attack of the fit. During this fit of faintness, he loses all awareness of his surroundings and the external world as well as even his own body. [He would not know, for instance, where he is fainting, whether there is water or fire nearby, whether any grave danger is approaching him and he should prepare to ward off this danger, etc.] He lies like an unconscious dead body; or at best like a man who is going through the throes of death and passing through the last stages just before death when his body is in convulsions and distorted, and he is frothing in the mouth and virtually gasping for his breath.

But it must be noted that this state of ‘unconsciousness’ is different from the deep sleep state called Sushupta that is mentioned in verse no. 13. During Sushupta state, there is no trace of agitation that accompanies the fainting disease or even at the last moment of death. On the contrary, there is utter tranquility and peace, utter blissfulness and rest. So, though outwardly the man remains ignorant and unaware of his surroundings and happenings in both these cases, i.e. during the Sushupta state (i.e. the deep sleep state of consciousness) as well as during the attack of the fit of the fainting disease, there is a vast and obvious difference between the two. While the former is a transcendental state of existence, the latter is a diseased state of the gross body [14]

15. There is a state which is beyond these four states of waking, dreaming, deep sleeping and fainting. It is called ‘Maran’ or the actual death. This state creates mortal fear in all those creatures that are born—right from the greatest, the most exalted, the highest and the most majestic, to the humblest and the lowest. When this state is arrived, the gross body to which all the creatures are so endeared and fond of has to be abandoned (15).

16. At that time, i.e. upon death, the creature (represented by his pure self, the Atma) withdraws all its organs of perceptions and actions along with their individual functions, and also all the vital Prans (the vital winds). Then carrying the baggage of Kaam (unfulfilled desires and passions) and Karma (accumulated effects of his deeds

done during this life), and accompanied or escorted by Avidya (ignorance or lack of truthful knowledge), that creature transits to another body in another destination.

Being ensnared by remaining engrossed in doing deeds and yearning to enjoy the rewards of those deeds and forced to suffer from their horrific consequences, the creature is unable or unwilling to abandon that baggage, and carries it to its new destination (in the hope of enjoying it there, or completing its unfinished tasks there). This is the cause of all the creature's sufferings and problems. Being trapped in this way, it never finds peace just like an insect which is trapped in a severe whirlwind (16).

[Note—The transition of the Atma from one body to another has been vividly depicted by citing how a caterpillar moves from one twig to another in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 4/4/3. How the past deeds decide the type of new life is described in 4/3/33 of the same Upanishad.]

17. When as a result of ripening of the fruits of all the good, auspicious, righteous and noble deeds done by a man in his past life and over a long period of time in many previous births he is inspired to seek final emancipation and salvation, when this desire becomes sincere and strong, then he should take the shelter and seek the advice of a wise Guru (moral preceptor and guide). He should serve him long enough to please him so that he throws open the treasury of profound spiritual secrets to him. The spiritual seeker is then able break free from the fetters of ignorance that had been tying him down and is able to acquire liberation and deliverance for his soul. [Refer to Advai Tarak Upanishad, Chapter 11, verse no. 13-18.] (17).

[Note—The fetters of ignorance refer to his unawareness of the fact that his truthful identity was not the body which he had been treating all along as his own 'self', but his Atma which was all along free and disassociated from what his body had been doing. It was his ignorance of the facts that had led to his Atma being falsely implicated as being a doer of any deed, and thereby being forced to get its self trapped in the vortex of doing deeds and suffering from those deeds. This is because when the man thought that 'he' is doing a particular deed it was deemed that his Atma or his soul, which is his pure self and truthful identity, was doing it. This misconception started a chain of events leading to the man getting trapped in this world of deeds and their consequences. But the wise teacher enlightens him about the facts. As a result, the man becomes wisened and enlightened; he realises that if he is not involved in those deeds that are being done by the body in as much as he remains mentally and emotionally aloof, detached and neutral towards them, he would not be accused as being a doer of the deed, and naturally would also not be liable to be punished for them. With this wisdom, he would not allow himself to get involved in the worldly deeds at his mental and intellectual level. With the sense of detachment gaining ground, he remains a mere spectator of all that is happening around him. Even as a spectator is not accused of anything done by the participants of a sport or drama, the man's Atma remains above and immune to all accusations of doing deeds and it does not therefore has to carry the baggage at the time of death.

The enlightened man also realises that the Atma is Brahm personified, and that the body is perishable while the Atma is not. This realisation gives him immense peace and a sense of eternity.]

18. Verily, unrighteous and pervert thoughts create bondage, while righteous and noble thoughts give freedom from them. Hence one should inculcate and harbour only good thoughts.

Imagination, elimination, debate, understanding and censorship help one to arrive at the real form or truthful nature of anything. Therefore, one should always spend one's time in constant search of the truth.

When, by the process of elimination and debate made possible by constant contemplation and deep insight, one is able to find the difference between the Jiva (the living creature), the world (made of illusions) and the supreme transcendental Being (Parmatma or the supreme Soul of creation), one arrives at the conclusion that there is only one essential truth in this creation, and that is the 'living entity' known as pure consciousness. Therefore, a wise and enlightened man is one who strives to remove the deceptive exterior façade which has created distinctions and differences in something that is essentially one, immutable and indivisible. So, by eliminating the dual concept of having two separate entities such as the Jiva and Parmatma on the one hand, and Jiva and the world on the other hand, a wise and enlightened man is able to establish the concept of 'non-duality' in the entire creation. This 'non-dual' entity is known as Brahm [18].

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Canto 3

[In this canto, the great sayings called Mahavakyas are being discussed.]

1. After that, sage Paingal asked Yagyavalkya once again, 'Please explain the great sayings to me in detail' (1).

[Note—The great sayings of the Vedas have been elucidated in Shukar Rasaya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

2. Yagyavalkya said, 'The great sayings or the universal truths are the following—(a) 'Tattwamasi'—that essence or Tattva is you; (b) 'Twam-Tadasi'—you are that; (c) 'Twam-Brahmasi'—thou art Brahm; and (d) 'Aham-Brahmasi'—I am Brahm. One should research and contemplate upon them; one should constantly ponder upon them (2).

3. In the great saying 'Tattwamasi', the two letters of the word 'Tat' are indicative of the omniscient and all-knowing glorious virtues of Brahm, are empowered with the stupendous glories of Maya (the delusion creating powers of Brahm), and are indicative of the other characteristic virtues of Brahm as being eternally blissful and being the cosmic womb or incubator in which the whole cosmos was conceived and developed (i.e. the divine entity which is the cause of all creation, in which the entire cosmos was envisioned and conceived, where it was nourished and sustained, and form where it finally emerged in the form as it is known now). This word 'Tat' is therefore indicative of the supreme, transcendental, eclectic and divine entity known as Brahm who is 'Avyakta', i.e. one who is without any manifest and visible attributes, one who is invisible and indefinable, and one who cannot be comprehended and visualised.

When that universal supreme Lord assumes different forms by residing in the bosom of individual creatures of infinite variety as their inner self, then he appears to be in different forms according to the body of the creature in which he has taken up his residence. Therefore, to identify that Brahm in the individual creature the word

‘Twam’ is used. In other words, this word Twam, meaning ‘you’ is indicative of the fact that the truthful person who is being addressed is not the external body of the individual creature whom the ignorant world regards as the identity of the creature, but the ‘real self’ of the creature which is its truthful identity, and this identity is Brahm. In other words, the address ‘Twam’ (you) refers to ‘Tat’ (Brahm) that resides in the creature and forms his true identity.

[The creature looks apparently different from the cosmic entity; the creature has its own limitations that are not applicable to the almighty Lord. Therefore, when the Lord assumed the form of a creature, it created an illusion of two different entities having separate existence. But this is basically a misconception based on ignorance.]

When Brahm is separated from its misleading title of Maya (deluding power) which causes so much mischief and fraud, and the creature is freed from its own misleading snare created by Avidya (ignorance), then the two words ‘Tat’ and ‘Twam’ indicate the same supreme, immutable and universal truthful entity called Brahm which is non-separable from the living creature’s Atma. In other words, the invisible Brahm which is the Atma of the cosmos is visible in the form of the creature whose Atma is that same Brahm. There is no difference between the two (3).

4. To discuss and hear about the meaning of the two great sayings ‘Tattwamasi’ (you are that essence) and ‘Aham Brahmasi’ (I am Brahm) is called Srawan, or to hear and pay attention to what is being said.

To research, deeply ponder upon, to reflect and think about, to contemplate and meditate upon the real meaning, profound significance and immense import of these great sayings while staying in a serene, lonely and secluded place so that there are no disturbances and proper attention can be paid to understand their meanings, as well as research their truth first hand so as to remove all doubts and confusions about them, is called Manan.

To firmly fix the mind and intellect on the conclusion arrived at after such deep research and ponderings is called Nidhidhyasan. It refers to that situation when one repeatedly thinks about any subject and repeatedly comes to the same conclusion, without leaving any iota of doubt as to its veracity, truthfulness and authenticity.

When the intellect and mind rids themselves of their restless nature, when the tendency of the Chitta (the sub-conscious mind) become steady and focused on the object of contemplation and meditation just like the light of a lamp remains unflickering and steady in the absence of wind, then that state is called Samadhi (4).

[Note—The concept of Samadhi has been explained other Upanishads of this volume also, e.g. Mandal Brahmin and Trishikhi Brahmin.]

5. In that state of Samadhi, the various Vrittis (inherent tendencies of a creature), which are basically imaginations of the Atma based on the powers of memory of the mind, first appear and then gradually disappear. Countless deeds done by the creature in as many lives of the past, and their accumulated effects are burnt or annihilated during this state. [This is because the mind ceases to function, and the memory is a function of the mind. Once the memory is defunct, the creature sincerely does not remember its past, and as such it does not worry about what unfulfilled tasks are left for it to do in the present, and neither does it worry about the impending punishments and misfortunes that howl at him due to its past misdeeds. This situation gives the creature peace of heart and soul.]

In due course of time, when diligent practice makes the seeker mature in his spiritual pursuits, he experiences a spray of bliss showering upon him like rain water.

That is why those who are expert in practicing Samadhi call it 'Dharma Megh', or the rain of righteous and auspicious feeling or being.

It is due to the good effects of Samadhi that all the bad effects of the various Vasanas (worldly desires, passions, yearnings and greed) are annihilated. All types of effects of deeds—whether good or bad—are completely destroyed from their roots. [That is, the seeker becomes neutral; he reverts back to his original status that existed before he had allowed himself to get trapped in the web of deeds by erroneously thinking that 'he' was the doer of those deeds, and therefore was entitled to enjoy their fruits. He forgets that his true self is the Atma and not the body that was doing any deed. This fallacious thinking is at the root of all his worldly problems. All creatures have a natural affinity for comfort zones and they seek things that give them pleasure, happiness and joy of the senses. That is the primary reason why the creature had turned towards this material world in the first place. But now during the state of Samadhi, he finds that the bliss which he gets here is more enduring and of a higher quality than the one he got from remaining involved with the world. This is because the happiness got out from the world had its own set of problems besides being temporary, while the bliss that is obtained during Samadhi gives a sooth massage to the Atma and provides for a long lasting and enduring bliss. Having tasted something better, the creature would lose all interests in the world and its illusive charms. In other words, his Vasanas would be trounced.]

With this enlightenment, what was understood theatrically earlier in relation with the saying 'Tattwamasi' (you are that) is now realised first hand. That is, now the seeker understands the true import of this statement; he realises that the word 'that' which refers to the ultimate Truth of creation which is pure conscious Atma or Soul known as Brahm is the same as the one that resides in his own bosom. And therefore all the grand and honourable epithets, the glorious virtues and benefits which are applicable to 'that' (i.e. Brahm) are also applicable to him (i.e. 'you'). This profound realisation or awakening makes him truly liberated even while he is alive and has a physical body with which he interacts with the world in an ordinary way—a state called 'Jivan Mukti'¹ (5).

[Note—¹As a *Jivan Mukta* person who is freed from the fetters of ignorance while he is alive, now his views have undergone a sea change; now he does everything with dispassion and detachment; now he treats everything as Brahm and each deed as an offering to that Brahm; now he realises that it is his body which is doing the deed and not his Atma, his pure self, and therefore he does not get mentally or emotionally involved in them so much so that he is blessed with the great qualities of equanimity, equality and forbearance, being equal and tolerant towards all, treating any circumstance on its merit and not judging it with any vested interests at work, and becoming an exemplary benchmark of righteousness and auspiciousness. This lends a selfless, holy and pious dimension to anything that he does. All his actions become one big holy sacrifice and a play of Dharma (something that is righteous and auspicious; that is noble and proper).

The word *Jivan* means 'life' and *Mukti* means 'freedom and liberation'. A person who has the grand, noble, righteous and virtuous characteristics as well as is enlightened and self-realised about the ultimate truth of this creation becomes totally detached from this artificial, mundane and illusionary world even while he physically lives in it, has a body, and goes about his routine duties and chores and does his assigned jobs in this world. But with erudition and truthful knowledge he has realised the futility of this world, and therefore he remains completely dispassionate and detached from it just like a dew drop lying on the petal of a lotus flower. He does not get the least

agitated or affected or passionate by any set of circumstances, whether adverse or favourable. He remains aloof and unruffled. That is being equivalent to becoming free from all the mental, emotional and physical uneasiness created by the turmoil of this world. It is deemed that such a person has obtained virtual deliverance from the shackles of this entrapping world, a condition called 'being emancipated and delivered while still alive'; this phrase explains what constitutes Jivan Mukti.

The *Jivan Mukti* state refers to freedom from being mentally engrossed in this delusory and artificial world and becoming free from the shackles that tie a person to the cycle of transmigration in this world while he still physically lives in it and carries out his assigned and designated duties and works with dispassion and detachment. This enables the creature to be free from any mental bondage that tie it to the ensnaring world; it is tantamount to be liberated from the shackles of this world while still living in the world with a body and going about one's daily chores in a routine manner. After all, the very existence of the world is due to the mind; if the mind does not think that the world has any relevance, then it loses all pertinence and relevance for the creature.

It would be relevant to point out here that without the control of the Mana (mind) and Indris (sense organs) it is practically impossible to dissociate oneself from the world. The mind and the sense organs of a man are inherently very restless. Their control is called 'Nigraha'. The word 'control' implies that both of them are reined in and prevented from recklessly following their usual sense objects of the material world, seeking comfort and pleasure from them. To do this we have to set a goal, and then focus them on these goals, for then, their energy and agility would be diverted towards that goal. For this purpose the goal would be spiritual and that would mean self knowledge and self realisation. Once this spiritual goal is set, the Ahankar or self esteem, pride and ego inherent in a man will take care of the rest—for now he would do his best not to fail in his endeavour which he has set for himself by himself. A focused mind and sense would help the man to control them, for now they would find no time and energy to go berserk and have to live up to their expectations.

Another method is to focus the mind on one thing at a time—and this time it is self knowledge. Once the mind is focused on this target, it would try to find out how to achieve it, and then actually implement that method.

These methods are positive and are more helpful as compared to methods used to suppress the mind and sense organs, because then they would feel like being trapped under duress and would try to break free at the first opportunity, creating greater distress to the seeker.]

6. [The following verses describe the process by which the cosmic creator reversed the process of creation. In this context, refer also to Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 3.]

The Ishwar decided to reverse the manifested creation consisting of the five Bhuts (the primary elements of creation earlier created by him in canto 1, verse no. 6) into its primary form. Hence, he transformed the entire creation from its 'action mode' to the 'cause mode'.

Then like an octopus withdrawing its tentacles, the subtle body, the organs of action, the Prans (vital winds), the organs of perception, the four Anthakarans, and converted them or reduced them into their basic elements from which they had been moulded at the time of creation.

Next, he merged earth into water (i.e. earth was submerged in water), water in fire (i.e. water was evaporated by heat), fire into wind (i.e. fire was blown away and extinguished by fierce wind), wind into the sky (i.e. the fiercest of storms were made impotent when they vanished into the dark recesses of the fathomless sky), and the sky into Ahankar (i.e. the sky element vanished in the body of Vishnu who represents the grosser form of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of the Supreme Being from which everything was born; here referring to the pride that Vishnu had that he can create the stupendously magnificent creation virtually from nothing, signifying that it was a 'mere hollow boast' symbolising the element of sky; refer 1/6 also in this context).

Next, this Ahankar merged with and collapsed into Mahat or Viraat (literally meaning great or vast or majestic or stupendous; the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm; the subtler form of Vishnu), Viraat into Abyakta (that which is un-manifest, un-describable and un-told; the macrocosmic subtle body), and finally this into Purush (the supreme transcendental Lord who is the supreme Spirit of creation; the macrocosmic causal body).

In this way, even the Viraat (the macrocosmic gross body of creation), the Hiranyagarbh (the macrocosmic subtle body), and Ishwar (the macrocosmic causal body of creation) collapse and merge with the Parmatma (the supreme Soul of creation).

In short, the circle goes one full round as it were! (6).

[Note—¹The five organs of actions are legs, hands, mouth, genitals and excretory.

²The five organs of perceptions are eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin.

³The five Prans are the vital winds—Pran or breath, Apaana, Udaana, Vyana and Samaan.

⁴Anthakaran are four—Mana or mind, Buddhi or intelligence, Chitta or sub-conscious and its memory, and Ahankar or the notion of pride.]

7. This gross body made up of the five elements does so many deeds, and these deeds leave in their wake their effects. When the creature becomes enlightened and awakened, he symbolically burns these past deeds and their accumulated effects, and it does not do any new deeds (in the sense that it remains non-involved in them at the mental and emotional plain) and therefore does not accumulate any new effects. Again, since the body cannot remain without doing anything as long as it lives in this world, so if it does noble, virtuous, righteous and auspicious deeds without any mental or emotional involvement, then for all practical purposes it is not getting tarnished and mired by the ill effects of deeds as it had been while doing deeds with selfish ends, or while doing deeds with mental and emotional involvement. Such deeds become holy, auspicious and pious; they are conducive to his spiritual progress instead of causing an obstacle in the creature's spiritual upliftment. Besides this point, the enlightened person realises the essential nature of things, and sees Brahm in all his actions and deeds.

As a result, his deeds become a service to Brahm. Instead of producing a chain of effects, good or bad, for the creature, such deeds done as a worship of Brahm acquire a holy overtone and become like offerings made in a fire sacrifice during a religious ritual. Everything put in the fire is reduced to ashes, and this applies to the deeds and their consequences as well. Obviously, the deeds being burnt and reduced to ashes, no remnant of consequences are left behind to be a cause of worry for the creature.

As soon as enlightenment dawns upon the wise man and he realises the irrelevance of the gross body as well as the fact that it is a hotchpotch arrangement of

the primary elements put together for the temporary habitat of the Atma, he begins to see these primary elements in the body instead of seeing the exterior charming façade of the physical body. Thus the distinction between the gross body (consisting of the organs of action and organs of perception) and the subtle body (consisting of the mind and intellect) vanish, and they become reduced to their basic ingredients or the primary elementary form such as the earth, water, fire, air and sky from which they were moulded in the beginning. [It is like seeing the element 'gold' in all golden jewelry.]

With this barrier removed, the next hurdle is the causal body, so called because it was the cause of the entire misleading façade coming into existence. This causal body is covered by a sheath of Vasanas and Vrittis as well as by Ahankar and Maya. These entities had prodded the otherwise restful, peaceful, blissful and neutral Atma to get involved in the creation of the artificial world having a subtle body and a gross body, and then remain entangled in its own creation like the spider that remains entangled in the web of its own creation. So naturally a wise man is one who strives to look beyond what is apparent and try to decipher the truth. He would clearly see the 'truth' that was cause of all his troubles. In other words, he removes the causal body from the scene. As a result, the Atma emerges from behind the curtain as the 'naked truth' which is devoid of any pretensions and embellishments of falsehoods.

Hence, the process of retrogression of creation symbolically follows this path—the gross body collapses into the subtle body, the latter into the causal body, and the latter into the Atma.

This is the case with a single individual. When it is extended to cover the entire visible world called Vishwa (the sum-total of all the gross bodies of all the creatures in existence), it is deduced that it would collapse into the Taijas (the sum-total of all the subtle bodies of all the creatures in existence), and the latter into the Pragma (the sum-total of all the causal bodies of all the creatures in existence) (7).

8. A wise, erudite and enlightened Brahmin (one who is firmly established in and engrossed in the pursuance of the truth known as Brahm) is one who burns this entire artificial creation, called the Brahmaand (universe), along with its causative factor (the various Vasanas and Vrittis as well as the Ahankar and Maya that have surrounded the pure conscious Atma like a bank of dark cloud enveloping the brilliant sun and hiding its glory behind its own veil of darkness) in the fire of Gyan (knowledge of the truth behind the smokescreen of falsehood that this external artificial world represents). When this happens, the only thing that is left behind is the Atma at the micro level of the individual creature, and the Parmatma (the supreme Soul of creation) at the macro level.

In other words, once all artificial and delusory aspects of creation are removed, only one universal Atma remains. Hence, a wise Brahmin would have realised, with the aid of Gyan, that there is but only one universal and uniform Truth in creation, and it is represented by the great saying of the scriptures 'Tattvam', or 'that essence is you'. As a result, he would develop steadfastness of mind and intellect, and be firm in his convictions about the truth of this great statement so much so that he would constantly strive to strike an uniformity and oneness in meaning of the two words 'Tat' (that) and 'Twam' (you). He would realise that these two words essentially refer to the same entity, where Tat refers to that truth which is known as Brahm, while Twam refers to the Atma of the creature—both are the one and the same thing; both are truly pure consciousness; both have the same qualifications, and both are non-dual.

With this process one is able to witness the self as the glorious and illuminated Atma just like one is able to witness the light of the sun when the clouds disperse from the sky (8).

[Note--That is, a wise person should realise that the universe is nothing but an *egg*, 'Andam', which gives no idea about the definitive figure and nature the forthcoming creation would eventually take, but this egg harbours in its bosom the entire creation of all shapes and sizes. This egg seems to be the same for all the creatures, but mysteriously it transforms into a fantastically varied creation of weird features, having countless forms, sizes, shapes and natures. But if one were to ponder deeply and peep into the essential origin of the creation he would see that egg at the core of everything. So when the wise man withdraws himself into himself, he basically withdraws his mind from all things external and concentrates it into the core which is like the egg from which the rest of the external world had originated. It is an established principle of Vedanta that the world exists because of the mind; it is the mind that conjures up the picture called the world. But the mind itself becomes active due to the presence of consciousness, and this consciousness which is the 'cause' of everything resides in the causal body, thereby giving the latter its name.

The invisible 'cause' residing in the egg is Brahm. The egg itself is called Hiranyagarbha at the cosmic level and Mana at the individual level. So the seeker has to burn his Mana; or he has to literally conquer his mind and heart which form his Mana. The conquest and subjection of the Mana is like burning it and reducing it to ashes, which is a figure of speech to indicate complete elimination of Mana. When this happens, the Atma has nothing that would interfere with its own glory and shine from radiating out in every direction. It was the mind and the various Vasanas (worldly passions and desires) and Vrittis (inherent tendencies and inborn habits) that were causing obstacles in its shine. Once they are dispelled and eliminated, the illumination of the 'true self' lights up the inner self of the wise Brahmin just like the sun lights up the realm once the dark veil of the clouds is removed.

The simple implication of the opening line of this verse is that when proper enlightenment comes to the man, he sees the universe as a uniform rounded egg. All artificial distinctions are literally burnt down with this enlightenment. Then he peeps into this egg and realises that it harbours the spark of life, but that spark is not visible. 'That' essential factor which gives the egg its value and importance is Brahm represented by the ability of the egg to harbour life and create a new creature from a homogenous mass of jelly. Similarly, the ability of the creature to create anything is actually a revelation of the creative power of Brahm present in the creature's bosom as the pure conscious Atma. Just like the cosmic generative power is lodged in the cosmic egg called Hiranyagarbha, the creature's subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect is the egg that generates this world around it. By the fire of Gyan (wisdom, erudition, truthful knowledge and enlightenment), this egg can be burnt or roasted, as a result of which one can get rid of the notion of existence of a world and its entangling effects. He thus feels liberated.]

9--11. Just like a lighted oil lamp placed in a large mud pot where its flames remains steady and un-flickering because it is not disturbed by the wind, the microscopic Atma¹ is also located in the body (i.e. in the lotus-like heart) of the spiritual seeker in the form of a fount or shaft of steady light that is without any smoke and is said to measure the size of a thumb in dimension. The great sage or hermit (a Muni) who contemplates and meditates daily upon this self-illuminated and glorious Atma—honoured with the epithet of 'Kutastha' (an entity that is occupying a high place; that is unchanging, unalterable, hidden, secret, imperishable, immovable, steady and constant) and 'Avaya' (that which does not diminish, which does not decay, which is infinite, and which has no beginning or

end), the Atma which has an exalted position and is established in his own inner self—at the time of going to sleep, is sure to find liberation and deliverance even while he is still alive in this world. Such a person is indeed called ‘Jivan Mukta’ (i.e. a person who has found emancipation and deliverance from the shackles that tie a creature endlessly to this world of life and death). He is indeed wise and sagacious, erudite and expert, enlightened and realised. He is indeed praise worthy. He is indeed fulfilled, fortunate and lucky.

If he contemplates and meditates upon this self-illuminated Atma at the time of death, then he transcends even this Jivan Mukti stage and attains a formless state of existence when becomes like an exalted Spirit which has no encumbrances and limitations imposed by a body. This ultimate liberation makes him steady and motionless like wind which has lost its movement and vibrations. That is, after death all his restlessness are calmed down; he has no desires left that would keep buffeting him like gusts of wind that keep the flame of the lamp flickering and swaying from side to side as if it would be extinguished any time. His ‘spirit’ is calm and tranquil like that air which has no movement or vibrations in it and therefore cannot be felt, though it is always present everywhere nevertheless. This is his ultimate emancipation and salvation; this is his symbolic rest (9-11).

[Note—¹*Atma/soul/spirit*—It is the microcosmic soul which resides in the heart of an individual creature and which is an image of the macrocosmic supreme Soul of the cosmos; the pure conscious self; the pure consciousness; the true identity of the creature; that entity that is deemed to be truthful, immutable, eternal and infinite, that is pristine pure, that is a fount of wisdom and enlightenment, is immaculate and impeccable, and is all-pervading, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and almighty like its principle called the supreme Brahm

The word ‘Atma’ refers to the pure spirit or soul of the creature. It is the true identity of the creature, called its ‘pure-self’ or ‘pure consciousness’ according to the Upanishads. It is pure consciousness present in the bosom of the individual creature in a microcosmic form and in the whole cosmos/universe in the macrocosmic form. It is a personification or embodiment of the supreme transcendental Brahm from whom the entire cosmos has come into being. The Atma is self-illuminated and self-enlightened, resembling a lamp lighted in the center of a dark room. It is the principal force of life; the living, conscious factor in a creature. The Atma is that entity which remains after a person’s mind and sense organs have turned away from all the sense objects of this material world, become absolutely calm, quiet and forlorn, and free from all restlessness caused by their habit of being restless and lustful. The quintessential Atma is characterised, inter alia, by such virtues as being immutable, immanent, imperishable, eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, formless, nameless, attributeless, infinite, conscious and ubiquitous entity that is the micro image of the supreme Soul of the creation called Brahm. All the attributes that are in short applicable to Brahm are also applicable to the Atma.

The dictionary describes *soul* with the following words—it is the life in a creature; it is that entity which thinks, feels, desires etc.; it represents the innermost being or nature; it is that which one identifies with oneself; it is the moral and emotional nature; it represents the nobleness of spirit or its sincere expression; it is a complete embodiment or exemplification of the essence of anything; it is the essence, pith or sap of anything; it is an indwelling and animating principle; it is the inspirer, motivator, leader and chief.

The word *spirit* is described as the vital principle; the principle of thought; the fundamental aspect or concept or notion of anything; the chief virtue or quality of anything; the essence and breath of life; the subtle substance present in a body that renders life to the body; the power that empowers the mind and the intellect to function.

The fundamental aspects of Atma can be understood by an example, such as water. The basic ingredients of water—the molecule consisting of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen (H₂O) is the same in all the forms that water takes—viz. moisture, mist, snow, rain, hail, cloud, drinking water, the water of the ocean, the river, the stream, the lake, the pond, the well and the puddle etc.

According to Subalo Upanishad, canto 3, verse no.3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there is a 6-fold path which helps in the realisation of the Atma. It is—(1) truthfulness (of mind, intellect and heart, of deeds and actions, of speech and all other activities); (2) charity (magnanimity and compassion, giving of donations and alms, providing succour and solace); (3) Tapa (sufferance and enduring of hardships, observing austerity and penance); (4) fasting (i.e. observing self restraint of the organs of taste and abstaining from indulgence in food); (5) Bramacharya (celibacy; abstinence and continence; self restraint of the sense organs); and (6) unwavering and sincere renunciation (as well as total and steady dispassion, detachment, indifference to the mundane and the worldly).

Out of these, the three virtues which should always be kept in sight at all times, are—Dam (self restraint of the sense organs, including the mind and heart), Daan (charity, giving of alms and donations), Daya (showing mercy and compassion to the unfortunate ones).]

12. In the final analysis, the soul or Atma transforms into an entity that is without a speech or which cannot be ascribed words to describe it, that cannot touch or feel and can neither be touched or felt, that has no form and shape and therefore cannot be seen, that has no taste or sap and neither can it taste any sap or juice, and that has no smell or fragrance nor can it smell any fragrance. It achieves the stature which is imperishable, that does not decay or diminish, that is without a beginning or is most ancient, that is eternal and infinite, and that is most majestic and stupendous. It attains the supreme transcendental state which is steady and stable, which is pure and immaculate, and which is known as the faultless and healthy Brahm (12).

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Canto 4.

1. Thereafter, sage Paingal asked sage Yagyavalkya once again, ‘What are the norms, thoughts, doctrines, tenets and philosophies meant for those who are known as Gyani (the knowledgeable, erudite, sagacious, realised and wise ones)? What is the state of their existence (i.e. how do they think, behave, act and live in this world)?’ (1).

2. Sage Yagyavalkya replied, ‘A person who is endowed with the noble quality of remaining free from having any sort of ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy, called having ‘Maan’, and is sincere about obtaining emancipation and salvation, called a ‘Mumuksha’, such a person acquires the spiritual potentials that enables him to provide deliverance to members of his lineage of up to twenty-one generations.

Further, if he becomes enlightened about the truthful knowledge of Brahm, i.e. becomes self-realised and acquires the holistic knowledge of the ultimate truth and absolute reality behind the façade of this creation, he is able to provide deliverance to members of his lineage of up to one-hundred generations (2).

[Note—It should be noted here that absence of ‘Ahankar’ or pride and ego which lead to one becoming arrogant and haughty is a prime requirement to attain this magnificent powers and authority that enables a person to bless others with liberation and deliverance from this mundane world of sensual objects. Obviously if he can do it to others then surely he must be able to obtain that goal himself because a man can give to others only what he possesses himself. The numerals twenty-one and one-hundred are only symbolic figures to indicate his potentials. It does not mean that all sinful and pervert people in his clan and family would automatically get emancipation; that is incredulous. Their deliverance is made possible because by his constant contact and interaction they are expected and able to develop and inculcate noble and auspicious virtues in themselves. But if that does not happen, then of course it would be a very sorry situation that even by having such an exalted person in their midst such persons could not benefit from him. The candle can give uniform light without distinction, but if a person does not wish to benefit from that light and would rather prefer to remain in the dark then no one could force him to use that light. But it is worthwhile to note here that that candle would die out one day; that the enlightened soul who lives in our midst now has to die one day. When he is alive he has achieved the state of Jivan Mukti, and when he dies he would achieve the state of Videha Mukti, i.e. when final liberation is attained sans the limitations of the gross physical body. This precise Mukti has been described in verse 12 of the last canto. But in that eventuality, the rest of the people around him would have lost a golden opportunity! The enlightened and self-realised man can provide the necessary inspiration and impetus, but the walking has to be done by us.]

3. One should treat one’s Atma (soul) as the Lord or Master of the chariot or its honoured passenger, the body as the chariot, the intellect as the expert charioteer, and the mind as the rein with which to control the entire setup (3).

4. The sense organs are said to be like the horses of that chariot who try to gallop away on the path which seem attractive to them. [That is, if the horses representing the various sense organs of the body are not properly reined in and controlled by the mind and intellect, then they would start to pull the chariot in different directions, leading to utter chaos and even to the breaking of the chariot and of course that would jeopardize the journey of the passenger. These organs have a natural tendency to swerve towards their respective sensual objects in this world which give them comfort and pleasure, but are detrimental for the spiritual journey of the soul. So they have to be properly reined and controlled.]

But the heart of those who are intelligent, wise, erudite, sagacious, self-realised and enlightened remains unruffled and unaffected by the turmoil below (i.e. by the agitations and restlessness caused by the different tugs and pulls created by the sense organs pulling the chariot-like body in different directions) as if the person is sitting high above in an air plane that is stationed above the world and watching the goings-on peacefully and without getting agitated and nervous about it. [That is, a wise person remains calm and unruffled inspite of the various mischief created by his sense organs which are like horses ever ready to canter away towards their respective objects that attract them. The Atma of an ordinary man who is engrossed in this world is virtually riding a chariot swaying wildly from side to side, as a result of which he is tossed about and the ride becomes very painful and tiring, if at all the Atma is able to

complete the journey because the chances are that the chariot would fall apart midway. On the other hand, the Atma of a wise and realised man who has been able to control his sense organs is able to have a comfortable and smooth ride, and it not only reaches its destination but does it fresh and rested.] (4).

[Note--This analogy of the *chariot* explains the situation of the Atma having to pass through this life inside the gross body of the creature, which is like the chariot, due to its past deeds and their consequences. The Atma has to reach its goal; and the goal or destination is Brahm, which is the realisation of the truth and obtaining final emancipation and salvation.

Another significant observation here is the example of the plane vis-à-vis the chariot. Both the men riding a plane as well as the chariot reach their respective destinations, but the one who is riding the chariot has a greater chance of getting tired and has to face the tossing and swaying of the chariot on rough ground, while the man in the plane has a smooth ride. Further, the man who rides the plane is symbolically 'above' the influences of the mundane world below, while the one who is on land has to be extra careful. This means that those who are wise and enlightened, those who have 'risen above' the mundane world and its problems caused by the sense organs and their wayward nature, are more privileged and exalted as compared to those who have not yet controlled their Indris or their sense organs as well as their Mana or their mind.

This analogy of the chariot is also used in Katha Upanishad, 1/3/3-4 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

We will note that no chariot can move without a *wheel*. This wheel is treated as a beautiful metaphor for Brahm in the Shwetshwatar Upanishad, canto 1, verse no.4 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which is quoted here because of its relevance to the chariot. The symbolism is starkly relevant for our present discussion. This particular verse says—"We know him as a wheel with one rim (circumference), three tyres, sixteen extremities, fifty spokes, twenty counter spokes, six sets of eight factors that strength it, a single yet manifold belt. This wheel is driven along three different paths, and one round of it gives the delusion of two".

Now let us see what are these individual parts or components of this wheel, and what do they stand for.

(a) The *one rim* stands for the 'Avyakta', i.e. that entity which is un-manifest and beyond comprehension but is at the core and form the cause of the rest of the things to have their basis and existence. It also stands for 'Prakriti' which is also called Avyakta because it is not verifiably seen directly but can only be deduced by interpretation.

(b) The *three tyres* are the three Gunas or qualities that form the nature and basic temperament of a man. These are Sata or the best form defined by being righteous, auspicious, noble and proper; Raja which is the medium quality marked by worldly desires, passions and activity; and Tama which is the meanest and lowliest of the three and is characterised by perversions, inertia, ignorance etc.

(c) The *sixteen extremities* are the eleven organs (five organs of perception—eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin + five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory + one mind) and the five elements (space/sky, air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth).

(d) The *fifty spokes* of this wheel are the five misconceptions, twenty-eight disabilities, nine contentments, and eight accomplishments or Siddhis.

[The *five misconceptions* called Viparyayas are the following—(1) 'Tama' which makes one think that the body is the pure self; the mistaken notion that what is non-self is the self. (2) 'Moha' which is the endearment for or infatuation with the sensual material objects of the artificial world. (3) 'Mahamoha' literally the great Moha is the high of delusions when one thinks that the world is real. (4) 'Taamisra' when one gets angry if the desired objects are not obtained. (5) 'Andha Taamisra' is the blindness

that comes in the wake of failure at fully enjoying the obtained objects of desire. For example, having to leave a meal midway due to an urgent call from the office; it leaves one frustrated and angry.

The *twenty-eight disabilities* or 'A-shaktis' are the following—eleven are related to the eleven organs as stated above, nine are related internally to the Anthakaran which are nine kinds of discontent as opposed to the nine kinds of contentment described below, and eight disabilities which are related to the inability to achieve the eight Siddhis described below.

The *nine kinds of contentment* or 'Tushti' are being satisfied with what one has and not to yearn for more. They are—contentment from the knowledge of Nature (such as the study of sciences), contentment from material gains, contentment from time (because time is a great healing factor and such people derive consolation that the worst of time would pass one day), contentment from good fortune (because many people believe that good luck is round the corner), contentment from renunciation, dispassion and detachment (which is however the best form of contentment), contentment from desisting from activity not from renunciation but because one feels that all activity would bring with it some gain and then it would be difficult to maintain it, so it is better avoided), contentment from being satisfied with whatever one has because one feels that whatever material thing is gained is perishable and would bring in its wake pain and sorrows, contentment from being satisfied with what one has because one thinks that the more one acquires the more the desires go on increasing, and contentment from the thought that no gain is possible without causing even a little harm to others, so it is better not to desire anything at all.

The *eight achievements* or accomplishments are the especial mystical authority and supernatural powers that one possesses. These are—(1) 'Uha' or the intuitive knowledge, skills and powers that one is born with. (2) 'Shabda' or the power of acquiring knowledge and skill just by listening to words instead of actually reading and mugging up of texts. (3) 'Adhyayan' or studying deeply and with concentration to acquire knowledge and skills. (4-6) 'Dukh-Vighaata' or the abilities to eliminate sorrows and sufferings. There are three sorrows that effect a man—viz. (4) sorrows that originate from external and perceivable sources; they are called 'Ahhautik', (5) sorrows that come from unknown phenomenal sources such as malignant stars and non-favourable Gods; called 'Adhidaivik', and (6) sorrows that have their origin in the body and the mind; called 'Adhyatmik'. (7) Then comes the seventh Siddhi which is 'Shurid Prapti' or receiving the fortunate company of someone who is compatible and like a soul-mate for the person, as opposed to the company of pervert and tormenting people. (8) And finally, 'Daan' or ability to give which implies that a person has sufficient for himself; it also implies that the person has an inherent noble nature and a renunciate and compassionate temperament.

So these are the so-called fifty spokes of the wheel representing Brahm.

(e) The *twenty counter-spokes* are the ten organs (five of action and five of perception) and their corresponding objects such as sound (ear), colour and shape (eye), taste (tongue), touch (skin), smell (nose), speech (mouth), walking or moving or going to a place (legs), grasping or accepting anything (hands), droppings (excretory), and enjoying sensual pleasures (genitals). These literally act as 'fasteners or belts' that hold or fix the above fifty spokes.

(f) Next comes the *six sets of eight factors*. These are the following—(1) 'Prakriti-Ashtakam' or the eight-fold nature of Prakriti; it consists of the five elements (sky, air, fire, water and earth) + mind + intellect + Ahankar (ego, pride). (2) 'Dhatu- Ashtakam' or the eight factors that sustain the outer body—outer skin (charma), inner skin (tvak), blood (rakta), flesh (mangsa), fat (medha), bones (asthi), marrow (majjaa) and semen or mucous (shukra). (3) 'Astha-Aishwariya' or the eight majesties and glories that are symbolic of the great mystical powers that a man possesses—'Anima' or the power to become as small as an atom; 'Mahima' or the

capacity to become huge and majestic like a colossus; 'Garima' or to become authoritative, dignified, assertive and a heavy-weight; 'Laghima' or to have humility and simplicity inspite of being powerful and potent; and 'Prapti' or the ability to acquire anything desired. (4) 'Bhav-Ashtakam' refers to the various eight states of the mind and the corresponding virtues and vices. These are the following—'Dharma' or righteousness, probity, propriety, and nobility of thoughts and conduct, as well as its opposite component called 'Adharma'; 'Gyan' or truthful knowledge and erudition, wisdom and enlightenment as well as its opposite component called 'Agyan'; 'Vairagya' or renunciation, detachment and dispassion as well as its opposite component called 'Raga or A-vairagya'; 'Aishwarya' or having material prosperity, lordship, majesty, magnificence, renown and pelf as well as its opposite component called 'A-aishwarya or non-aishwarya' or poverty and lack of renown. It is obvious that each of these virtues affects the mental bearing of different persons in different ways. (5) 'Deva-Ashtakam' or the eight kinds of celestial beings. These are the following—Brahma the creator, Prajapati the guardian of the visible creation created by Brahma, the Gods, the Gandharvas (heavenly musicians), Yakshas (semi-gods; like Kuber the treasurer of the Gods), Rakshas (the demons), Pittars (spirits of dead ancestors), and Pishach (monsters and ghouls). All these entities have supernatural powers. (6) 'Guna-Ashtakam' or the eight qualities. These are Daya or compassion and mercy; Kshma or forgiveness; Anasuya or freedom from jealousy, hatred and ill-will; Shauch or purity and immaculacy; Anaayaasa or freedom from fatigue and indolence; Akirpanya or generosity and magnanimity or lack of miserliness; and Aspriha or lack of craving or yearning for sensual pleasures.

(g) The *one cord* of desire that assumes many forms, and it is called 'Vishwarupaika Paasham'. The entire world revolves round 'desire', whether the desire is noble or Satvic, or pertains to worldly gains or Rajsic, or deals with all that is evil and pervert or Tamsic.

(h) The *three Paths* along which the wheel is driven are represented by—Dharma or the path of righteousness and virtuousness, A-dharma or the path of evil and perversions, and Gyan or the path of knowledge and erudition, of wisdom and enlightenment.

(i) *Each revolution* of the wheel gives to two types of delusions—such as good and bad, sorrows and happiness, etc. These opposite sets of notions are called 'delusions' because in actual fact the world where they are felt, the mind and the body which feel them are all delusory and have no truthful existence. The real entity that exists is one, and it is Atma or Brahm. The rest is a delusion.]

5. Great sages and seers have asserted that the Atma enjoys or suffers from anything because it allows itself to be associated and engrossed with the sense organs called the Indri as well as the mind called the Mana. When it is able to free and disassociate itself from these two hindrances, it is able to establish itself in the heart of the creature as Narayan (the supreme Lord Vishnu or the Viraat Purush) himself personified.

In other words, a man who does not realise that his true identity is not his body but the Atma thinks that what his body is doing under the guidance of the mind is being done by him. And since this 'him' is the Atma, it follows that the Atma is deemed to be involved in those deeds. Therefore it has to bear the consequences. But as soon as enlightenment dawns upon the man about his true self, the Atma, and its great divine and holy virtues, he realises that he has nothing to do with the sense organs or the mind. In actual practice this is possible by two methods—viz. one, by the study of the scriptures and guidance of a wise teacher who enlighten the man about his true self, and two, by exercising control over the sense organs and the mind once this enlightened view becomes firmly rooted in his intellect and sub-conscious

(i.e. his Buddhi and Chitta) without any iota of confusion and doubt. By gaining control over them and dissociating himself from the body and the mind, that wise and enlightened person is able to make his Atma attain its original glory as the supreme transcendental Narayan, or the Viraat Purush known as Vishnu. This Lord Narayan is a personification of Brahm. In other words, the Atma becomes synonymous with Narayan (5).

[Note—By getting involved in the world through the medium of the mind and the sense organs of the body, the otherwise immaculate and holy Atma gets tainted and deluded into thinking that it is the one that is doing a particular deed and therefore it is the one who is entitled to its benefits and therefore it also has to suffer the horrible consequences of those deeds. The basic premise that brings about this misfortune is the misconception of the Atma that the body belongs to it, and that the mind is wiser than it. It forgets that in reality this body is perishable and it is simply a vehicle or a chariot to carry the Atma through this world which it has got as a punishment for the same misconception it has had in the previous life. The body and the mind are there to serve the Atma and the latter should use their services to get to its destination as described in the previous verse nos. 3-4.

Now when the Atma is able to realise its true form as the imperishable and immaculate entity that has the qualities of equanimity, evenness, dispassion, neutrality and detachment from everything done by the mind and the body, it is only then its purity and holiness shines through like the sun shining through the sky when the clouds are dispersed. For this, the Atma needs to actively control the mind and the sense organs which are inherently very restless. Their control is called 'Nigraha'. The word 'control' implies that both of them are reined in and prevented from recklessly following their usual sense objects of the material world, seeking comfort and pleasure from them. To do this we have to set a goal, and then focus the mind and sense organs on these goals, for then, their energy, vigour, drive and agility would be diverted towards that goal. For this purpose the goal should be of a spiritual and auspicious nature, and that would mean self knowledge and self realisation because only a wise man would be able to distinguish between what is good and what is not. Once this spiritual goal is set, the Ahankar or pride and ego inherent in a man will take care of the rest—for now he would do his best not to fail in his endeavour which he has set for himself by his own initiative. A focused mind and sense would help the man to control them, for now they would find no time and energy to go berserk and have to live up to their expectations.

Another method is to focus the mind on one thing at a time—and this time it is self knowledge. Once the mind is focused on this target, it would try to find out how to achieve it, and then actually implement that method. The mind would not have the time to think of other matters.

These methods are positive and are more helpful as compared to methods used to suppress the mind and sense organs, because then they would feel like being trapped under duress and would try to break free at the first opportunity, creating greater distress to the seeker.

Once the Atma is freed from this tainting effect created by the delusions created in it that it is the 'doer' of deeds and therefore a 'enjoyer or a sufferer' from the consequences of those deeds, the Atma acquires the glory of its true self, which is the personification of the supreme transcendental Lord Narayan himself with all his grand and majestic virtues.]

6. Till the time all the effects of the creature's past deeds, good or bad, and their incumbent effects are not exhausted or annihilated, it continues to assume new bodies (i.e. new birth) and shed the old one (i.e. die) much like the serpent that sheds its old cuticle and assumes a new one. But, on the other hand, the friar or a wandering mendicant who does not have a permanent residence (i.e. who keeps on the move and

does not stay for more than one night in a village) as well as a person who is liberated from the worldly shackles (i.e. one who is called 'Jivan Mukta' or who has been successful in breaking free from the entrapping web of worldly ignorance and delusions while he is alive and has become self-realised) are like the bright moon in the sky which appears daily in a new form, rising in the sky, traversing across the path of the sky and finally setting in the horizon, only to rise again the next night. This cycle continues from the new moon night until the time it attains the pinnacle of its glory on the full moon night and ends with the night when it finally sets as a dark disc and vanishes in the deep recesses of the fathomless sky. (6).

[Note--Here, the rise of the moon symbolises the birth of wisdom and enlightenment in the wise man, its ever increasing brightness during its waxing phase stands for his rising glory, its reaching its best brightness on the full moon night is a metaphor for the man's reaching the pinnacle of his spiritual achievement and its attendant fame and glory, its gradual decline during its waning phase symbolises the withdrawal from the world and renunciation that marks a wise friar or a wandering monk who is filled with extreme humility and renunciation with the maturity of his wisdom and erudition about himself and his true nature though he has to appear in the humdrum world daily to beg for food to sustain his body, but he is nevertheless withdrawing from the world and shunning the limelight or publicity in a gradual way. And finally when the moon sets for last time in the dark night it symbolises the final disappearance of the friar or the renunciate monk from the worldly scene. But even as the moon has actually not vanished and gone for good, for it renews its appearance the very next day, such an exalted soul does not actually die, but he merely vanishes from the sight of ordinary mortals in this world to rise up in the celestial sky in the heaven as an exalted Spirit. We must note that a lot of symbolism is used in the Upanishads to explain great truths, and therefore the examples should not be taken too literally by their word meaning.]

Another interpretation of this analogue of the moon is this—the moon appears to vanish into oblivion during the dark night; it appears to change its form and brightness on a daily basis; it appears to rise and set daily; it appears to be eclipsed during the lunar eclipses. But as all modern men know that the moon neither sets nor rises, it neither actually changes its form and shape, for these changes are due to its movement in the sky with relation to its position vis-à-vis the earth, and its brightness is due to the reflection of the sunlight from its surface. Similarly, the wise and enlightened friar and a wandering monk also realise that their Atma is shining by the light of Brahm reflected from it, or that whatever shine and glory that they possess, whatever respect and honour that they get is not due to their body but due to the potential energy, magnificence, divinity, holiness, sublimity and ethereal nature of their Atma. They also realise that the body keeps on changing every day—right from the day it was born symbolised by the new moon, till the day it reaches its prime of youth represented by the full moon, and finally the day when it dies as symbolised by the dark moon. This realisation fills them with utmost renunciation and humility. As has been already pointed out in verse no.2 above, when such a man has eliminated his erroneous self-pride and ego, he becomes spiritually exalted, and if this is coupled with realisation of the supremacy of Brahm and the fact that his Atma is shining with the light of Brahm like the moon shining with the light of the sun, he has indeed reached the pinnacle of spiritual realisation which culminates in liberation and deliverance.]

7. Whether a wise, erudite and self-realised man leaves his mortal body (i.e. dies) in a pilgrim site or in the household of an impure outcaste, he does not bother about either of them, for once he leaves the body, or once his Pran (the vital wind that supports his life in his body; the breath) leaves the body, he always reaches or achieves the exalted

stature of 'Kaivalya' which means that he attains the ultimate state for his Atma or soul, and it is to become one with the supreme Soul of the creation called Parmatma. He has indeed accessed truthful emancipation and salvation notwithstanding whether his body was discarded in a holy place or not (7).

[Note—The reader would appreciate the high thinking of these Upanishadic philosophers who treated all creatures alike, and did not believe in caste discrimination. What more proof is needed than this verse that makes no distinction between dying at a holy place like a pilgrim site or in the household of an impure outcaste called a Chandal. For a world torn asunder with numerous castes and creeds, these words of profound wisdom of the Upanishads should come as a fresh breath of fragrant air. Read on, dear reader, it is certain to enlighten you!]

8. After his death, it does not matter whether such a person's body is sacrificed to the elements, i.e. cremated and the ashes are scattered in all the directions, or it is left out in the open to be eaten by worms or birds of prey or left there to decay, or it is buried in dug-up earth—the end of such attained and exalted persons (i.e. of renunciates and self-realised friars or wandering mendicants or hermits or monks) is always the same, they attain the only truthful state which exists and which is known as Kaivalya (as described above). It must be noted that this provision is exclusively meant for a 'Parivrajak' (a Sanyasi; a friar; a renunciate monk or hermit), and not others¹. (8).

[Note--¹Why is it not prescribed for others? Because only a truly realised person is entitled to attain that exalted stature of Kaivalya; because only a truly realised person would not be too obsessed with his body getting a decent burial or cremation for he must have realised that his true self is his Atma and definitely not the body, which is by the way inherently abhorable because of its dirty contents, because it is inherently perishable and gross, and therefore it does not matter what happens to it as long as the Atma gets a good destination. He realises that giving a nice end to the body is inconsequential for his true emancipation and salvation. What is the good of burning heaps of costly wood and fuel in trying to cremate the body, or occupying precious earth, if the soul lies trapped in the slush of worldly desires and yearnings, doing deeds that serve no enduring purpose for it, and then sliding into the slippery swamp of birth and death from where it is difficult for it to retrieve itself.]

9. For those who have become one with the supreme transcendental consciousness (i.e. Brahm), there is no period of grieving for them after their demise. There is no need to offer the fire ritual (cremation and fire sacrifices) for the peace of their souls; there is no need for offering a 'Pind' (a rounded ball of cereals offered to the soul of departed person as part of funeral rites); there is no need of doing 'Tarpan' (offering oblations and libations of water for the satisfaction of the soul of the departed person). There is even no need of doing the annual 'Shraadh' ceremony (a ritual to remember the dead, show respect to them, and offering food and water as oblation and libation to them every year) for them. [Why? Again the answer is that their soul has finally found its final and ultimate destination, and it is merging itself with the supreme Soul called Parmatma or the supreme Lord. Such persons have virtually become one with Brahm, and their soul does not live as any separate spirit that needs to be offered any oblation or libation.] (9).

10. Even as anything that has already been burnt cannot be burnt again, and anything that has been properly cooked already cannot be cooked in a better way again, there is similarly no need to do any Shradh (annual ritual for the peace of the soul of dead ancestors) or any other rituals for the truly enlightened person who has already burnt

himself in the fire of Gyan or truthful knowledge which ignites wisdom, erudition and enlightenment in him about his own true self. (10).

[This fire of enlightenment that he is the pure consciousness and different from the gross body, that the world that he sees is basically hollow and false, that whatever is seen is nothing but the delusion created by Brahm, including his body, that his Atma and Brahm are non-dual, etc., helps to burn all his faults, such as Ahankar or pride and ego etc. Such an exalted soul does not wander as a spirit but gets merged with the primary source, the supreme Soul called Parmatma or Brahm, and attains the ultimate emancipation. So there is no need to offer any kind of worship to him, nor does he expects it nor would he accept it.]

11. As long as a person has a notion of the world and the existence of various relationships should he serve his Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide). Like his Guru, he should also serve his wife and his children (11).

12. 'I am of an immaculate mind and heart; I am an embodiment of pure consciousness; I am enduring, tolerant and patient; I am (a personification of) that Brahm who has these characteristics; I am it'—when such profound Gyan or truthful knowledge (about the self and reality) is acquired by the seeker, when this truth is experienced by him, and when this awareness and erudition about the truthful target of spiritual pursuits (i.e. the realisation that the supreme Brahm resides in his own bosom as the Atma, and that there is no duality between his own self and that supreme consciousness called Brahm) becomes firmly established in his heart and he is convinced of its veracity, it is only then that his body becomes calm and quiet, devoid of all restlessness imposed or exerted upon him by the restless mind¹.

With all restlessness removed, both from the mind and the body, the aspirant/seeker becomes unaware of their existence. In other words, for all practical purposes the mind and body cease to matter; they stop disturbing his peace. As a result, what is left is nothing but the pure consciousness². (12).

[Note—¹The *mind* is always restless and it keeps the *body* restless. This is proved when a tired man sleeps. At that time, his weary body lies like a dead log of wood, not wanting to stir at all, but the mind is so restless that the same man 'dreams' the wildest of dreams, imagining nightmarish things so profound that when he wakes up from a long sleep he is as tired as he was at the time of going to sleep, though his body had been taking complete rest all this while. So in effect, the restless mind had not allowed the man to take 'effective rest'. This is what is meant here when the verse says that the body gets peace when the man realises the true nature of his self, because then his mind ceases to be in a state of constant flux due to the man concentrating it even forcefully upon the Atma, whereby the mind has no time to think of any thing else that is nonsense. This results in a situation when the man is able to harness the energy of the mind and concentrate it upon what lies beyond the restless picture projected by the mind; he is able to channelise the mind's vital strength from the falsehoods to the truth-hood. This in its wake gives peace to the body because with the elimination of the constant nudging by the mind, the organs of the body get a chance to find rest and peace.

When the mind is restless, it directs the body's sense organs towards their respective objects of perception and action. The mind does not allow the body to take rest. For example, a waking man's eyes are constantly jumping from one sight to another, his ears hear one sound after another, and even his skin starts to itch if he has no other thing to do! Let a man sit alone for any length of time and he would become fidgety and change his position frequently lest the parts become numb. It is here that meditation helps—it trains the body and the mind to remain steady and calm like

obedient pupils under the tutelage of a strict teacher. With this outlook, the man is able to rein the mind as well as the body.

The mind decides how we perceive and experience the world—the same circumstance, the same input of stimuli might seem pleasant at one given time but most irritating at another because the mind perceives them differently. Therefore, by exercising control over the mind by diverting it to the inner-self, one is able to give peace to the body.

Again we must note that the mind and therefore the body exist because of the following four things—(a) Guna or attributes or qualities that are inherent in the character of a man, (b) Kriya or activity that are so characteristic of them both, (c) Vishesha or the unique features that the mind and body possess, and (d) Sambandh or the relationships that they establish with each other and the rest of the world. The physical body depends upon the mind as would be clear when we consider the fact that all the perceptions and the actions have their seat in the respective faculties of the mind (brain). For example, if the mind is somewhere else, then no matter we might be staring at an object for hours, but we would not register it in our memory, and we would not recognise it when shown again, though we had been staring it for so long. This applies to all other parts of the body.

²This is due to the fact that the creature's body consists of three types of bodies—viz. the gross body consisting of the sense organs, the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex, and the causal body which harbours the pure conscious Atma. When the first two are eliminated, or when the enlightened creature is able to divert his attention from the body making it non-relevant and non-existent thereby preventing even the mind from receiving any new inputs from the gross world and becoming irrelevant and non-existent, naturally what is left is the third body. This causal body has the Atma surrounded in the bliss sheath; it was its interaction with the external world through the medium of the mind and the body that it got agitated. Again this was because the Atma was ignorant of its holy and sublime nature; it was surrounded by the veil of 'Avidya'. When this veil of ignorance is removed from the Atma by acquisition of truthful knowledge and self-realisation based on contemplation and meditation, either as advised by one's wise and realised teacher or by the deep studying of the scriptures, the pure and original shine and glittering illumination of the Atma comes to the fore. This leads to the realisation of its blissful nature, because when all agitations are removed, the seeker finds perpetual peace and tranquility.]

13. What is the use of milk to a person who has drunk nectar or ambrosia? Similar, once a man realises his true self (i.e. becomes enlightened and awakened), what is the purpose of the Vedas? [That is, since the main purpose and aim of the Vedas and other scriptures is to enlighten and awaken a person about himself, once this purpose is served, once he is awakened and enlightened about his true self, i.e. about his Atma as being pure, immaculate, illuminated conscious Truth, then there is no further role of the Vedas.]

For an ascetic or hermit who is fulfilled by drinking the ambrosia of Gyan (truthful knowledge of reality, of the self and of Brahm), no other rituals or sacraments remains to be done. If he feels that he is supposed to do any ritual or observe any sacraments or perform any sacrifice or do any other righteous deed, then it is deemed that he is not fully knowledgeable about the fundamental Truth, that he is not really awakened, that he is not an expert in the essential truth and the basic doctrines as preached by the scriptures. 'He' (the supreme Truth personified; the supreme, transcendental, universal, uniform pure conscious immanent Being known as Brahm) is not far though he seems so far and unreachable; he is a separate and distinct entity though he is present in a Pinda (a rounded ball of cereals offered to

dead ancestors as their food; any rounded thing such as a egg, a ball, earth etc.) as well. 'He' is omnipresent and all-pervading (because there is nothing beyond him; there is nothing that has come into existence that is not one or the other form or manifestation of 'him'; all that is, is 'he' personified!) (13).

[Note—If analysed properly, this verse incorporates the great sayings or the Mahavakyas at once—'that is you; you are that; you are Brahm; and I am Brahm' as mentioned in canto 3, verse no.1.]

14. Supreme bliss and happiness is obtained by purifying one's heart and being firmly convinced of the statement that 'I am that faultless and perfect Brahm; I am everything that is there'. This firm belief and steady conviction blesses the believer with immense happiness and bliss (of self fulfillment, self realisation and the eclectic awareness that one is not devoid of any greatness that one ought to possess) (14).

[Note—When one is firmly rooted to the central idea that whatever exists is a manifestation of the ultimate truth of creation called Brahm, and that the Brahm is perfect and complete, then it follows naturally that one's own self is also Brahm even as the rest of the creation, which the seeker had been treating as different from his own self out of ignorance till perfect knowledge had dawned upon him, is also Brahm. This profound realisation strikes off at one go all the reasons for so much jealousy, hatred, strife and ill will in this world; it would suffuse the seeker with the great holistic virtues of equanimity, fortitude, compassion, graciousness, humility and love for all. Besides this, it would inculcate great confidence in the seeker; it would remove all causes of depression and dejection that engulf entire generation of people engrossed in pursuing the materialistic world of sensual objects, trying to extract happiness, peace and bliss from them which however always eludes them. This does not mean that one should absolutely run away from the world and forgo acquisition of scientific knowledge and instead become reclusive monks in a forest or an obscure monastery, for this would be a regressive interpretation of the Upanishadic teaching. The scriptures emphasise that acquisition of knowledge is most welcome, but it should give stable mental peace to the aspirant and give his agitated soul rest; it should serve its purpose of upliftment and improvement of the person as a whole, and not merely serve to quench his sensual hunger for material comfort and pleasure, for such hunger would never be permanently satisfied, and then the aspirant would have to search for more sensual comfort, and the cycle would continue endlessly. On the other hand, if he realises that these worldly assets cannot quench the thirst of his soul for emancipation and salvation, he would endeavour to seek that ambrosia that would indeed fulfill his thirst and hunger. The word 'his' is to be understood by 'him' first—it is not his body. Then what is it? The Upanishads seek to answer that fundamental question; it is the Atma, it is the 'pure self', it is the consciousness, it is the self born illumination that is so powerful as to make a lifeless body full of vigour, life and vibrancy. This is that entity called 'I', 'me' and 'Brahm'.]

15. Even as water poured into water, milk into milk, and clarified butter into butter become indistinguishable from one another (i.e. both units become one after mixing), the Atma of the creature merges with the supreme Atma (Brahm) and become indistinguishable from it. [This is called the 'Kaivalya state', or the only ultimate state in which the soul would find its final peace and rest.] (15).

16. When the falsehoods and misconceptions pertaining to the body are totally eliminated (i.e. when the creature understands that his body is not his real self and identity, and that while the 'real self' is immortal, the body is mortal) with the aid of Gyan (acquisition of truthful erudition and wisdom about the basic truth and essential nature of the truthful self), and when consequentially his 'Buddhi' (i.e. his intellect

and discrimination faculty) is freed from being torn apart and getting perplexed from numerous doubts and confusions, and instead becomes steady and firmly convinced of the ultimate 'truth', it is only then the wise, realised, enlightened and erudite seeker is able to burn the knots of deeds and their results that tie him down. To burn them, he uses the fire symbolising 'Brahm Gyan' or the knowledge of the Truth, the knowledge of Brahm. (16).

[Note--This is because the light of knowledge represented by awareness of the ultimate truth helps to dispel the darkness of ignorance. The enlightened person disassociates himself from the body which is actually involved in doing deeds in this world, and rather concentrates on the entity that is the master of the ring, as it were. This 'master' is the Atma, and not the mind which only serves the former as its assistant. His intellect which is the centre of his wisdom and erudition is certain that this is the fact, and when the intellect has the upper hand as opposed to the mind, then the person realises the truthful state of affairs, and this helps him to break free from the shackles that tie an ordinary creature who is less fortunate in wisdom and erudition to the deeds and their consequences.]

17. After that, having cleansed himself of all impurities like a piece of freshly washed and cleaned cloth, he attains the supreme transcendental Parmeshwar (the supreme 'Ishwar' or Lord; here referring to Brahm) who is non-dual (i.e. one and immutable). With this attainment, he becomes established in the truthful form of his 'pure self' known as the Atma (i.e. he becomes truthfulness personified). He becomes one and inseparable from it like two separate bodies of water become one and inseparable when they mix with one another. [Refer verse no. 15 above.] (17).

18. The Atma is subtle and sublime as the sky, and invisible as the air or wind. It is stable and unwavering, constant and perpetual, both outwardly and inwardly. It can only be 'seen' or perceived or witnessed and experienced by the light of enlightenment emanating from the torch of Gyan (wisdom, erudition and truthful knowledge) (18).

19. A truly realised and enlightened person called a Gyani dissolves himself and merges with the supreme transcendental entity (Brahm) wherever and however he dies because that supreme entity is ubiquitous, all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent like the sky (19).

[Note--This is because for a true Gyani his body is not his true self, but it is his Atma or pure consciousness which is another form of the supreme entity and has the same set of characteristics as that entity, known as Brahm, possesses. When such a man dies, he, as his Atma, rides upon the Pran or the vital winds present inside his body and simply leaves the latter and makes its exit from it just like a serpent leaving its old cuticle and effortlessly coming out of it.

Another interpretation is this—When such a wise man dies, then he simply discards his gross physical body. The sky or space present inside the body and the one outside it is one uniform and inseparable element; it is the artificial boundary of the sac-like body that has created an artificial division between the two. So when this artificial demarcation is removed, it is but natural that the two skies become one. Further, a wise man is expected to know that Brahm and sky are synonymously treated because the former has all the attributes of the latter—it is immutable, immanent, omnipresent, ubiquitous, all-pervading, pure and untainted, vast and fathomless, infinite and eternal. The air fills the sky and is the second element after the sky that is the nearest analogue for Brahm, for it is in the air that the sound called the cosmic Naad or the divine ethereal sound of cosmic music of creation had made

its presence felt before the visible creation actually came into being. Pran or the 'vital spark of life' is a name given to the air element present inside the creature that gives the body its much needed life, vigour, vibrancy and vitality.

Therefore, when he dies, his Pran simply coalesces with the air present outside his body, and his Atma present in the subtle sky of the heart, known as the Hridya-akash, simply merges with the supreme all-pervading Atma present in the sky outside the body, the 'greater sky' or 'Mahakash', because the limiting and segregating boundary of the body has now been removed.]

20. Even as the limited space present inside the mud pot is called 'Ghata-kash' just to identify it for hypothetical purposes and it becomes one with the space outside when the pot is broken, because it is essentially no different from the vast and fathomless sky present outside the pot, the wise Yogi (ascetic or hermit) who has become truly enlightened and acquires the truthful knowledge of the reality, is able to access that supreme, immutable and infinite state of existence characterised by being without any form or shape, and which has no or does not need any support for itself. This state is called 'Gyan Loka' or the abode marked by the state of existence where there is truthful awareness of reality, where there is truthful knowledge, where there is erudition and wisdom, where there is the light of self-realisation, and which is infinite, formless and all-pervading as the sky. Such an abode symbolises a treasury or fountain of Gyan, and hence it is called a Gyan Loka, and its inhabitant is Brahm who is Gyan personified (20).

[Note—This verse builds upon the explanation given as a note to previous verse no.19 above.]

21. Even if one stands on a single leg and does severe Tapa (austerity, penance and several other religious sufferance as a means of penitence) for one thousand years, it will not be equivalent to one of the sixteen fractions or part of 'Dhayan Yoga' (a contemplative and meditative exercise wherein the aspirant focuses his attention on the pure self which is conscious Atma residing in his own heart, and which is the personification of the cosmic consciousness known as Brahm) (21).

[Note—It is to be noted here that mere putting the body to immense hardships and torturing it by doing severe Tapa is not conducive to any spiritual enhancement if the main objective is not fulfilled. On the other hand it might prove counter productive because one's mind would be too engaged in either trying to overcome the pain by conscious means, or trying harder and harder to inflict greater suffering to the body in the false hope that this would lead to attainment of emancipation and salvation than to find time and energy to concentrate upon the real target.

On the contrary, if a person is so sincere in achieving self realisation, he would do better by avoiding unnecessary hardships and instead learning to fix the mind and intellect on the real 'truth' that exists behind the façade of falsehoods.]

22. A person should understand that if someone wants to acquire knowledge in its entirety and attempt to grasp the object of that knowledge fully, then he might spend his entire life and even spend one thousand years studying the immense tomes of scriptural literature but he would never succeed in getting across it, he would never fathom it, he would never achieve success in acquiring a hundred percentage perfect knowledge of anything. [In other words, a man should never become too obsessive about acquiring full and perfect knowledge of anything because knowledge is like the vast sky, and it is virtually impossible to grasp the sky in its entirety. The horizon of knowledge keeps of expanding and always changing.] (22).

23. A wise and erudite man must understand that the ‘truth’ is imperishable, and that one should always strive to have access to the truth as well as to things which are imperishable and eternal (as opposed to things that are false, transient and perishable). A man’s life is short, transient and mortal; he does not have the luxury to spend endless time in reading voluminous scriptures, or to first try out all the other things before embarking upon the search of truth. Being short of time, he should not fritter it away, but whole heartedly pursue the ‘imperishable truth’, called ‘Akshar’¹. This Akshar is Brahm. Therefore, he should not allow himself to be entangled in the endless web weaved by myriad versions and interpretations of the same ‘truth’ as described in the numerous scriptures and their branches, but instead concentrate his mind and energy on the underlying fundamental principle expounded by all of them. This basic principle of all spiritual and metaphysical teaching is what is known as Akshar—i.e. the imperishable and eternal Truth known as Brahm. This Brahm is the Principal Authority of creation. This is the only thing or knowledge that is worthy of being pursued, honoured and praised by all spiritual aspirants. The rest is a waste of time and energy (23).

[Note—¹There is a clever play upon words here. The word *Akshar* means (a) the alphabet or the letter, and (b) something that does not decay, diminish and perish. The scriptures are written words, but who would read them and preserve them when the human race would be no longer here one day! A man’s life is transient and mortal; he is not certain of the next moment. So this verse basically emphasises that it is futile pursuing and getting too obsessed about anything consisting of letters that is itself perishable in due course of time. Life is a short affair, the scriptures are vast and fathomless, and so if one wishes to master them all in one life then it is just impossible. Further, the main goal of these scriptures is to make a man realise the truth; their main aim is to show him the light of spiritual wisdom, to inculcate in him noble virtues and auspicious qualities that would make him a real human and not an animal in the guise of a man. For it must be understood that the scriptures and their letters are not meant for animals for the obvious and simple reason that animals don’t read!

So this verse advises mankind to concentrate its energy in pursuance of what is the truth, and not to get mired in literary debates and one-upmanship, trying to brag one’s scholarship and scriptural knowledge if he is not able to actually *implement* them in practice in his own life. In fact, this ‘implementation’ aspect is of greater importance than simple literary knowledge. For example, what good is a medical book telling the actual truth of a disease and its cure if the doctor who is supposed to know this book backwards and forwards and be an expert in this book is not able to deliver to the patient, or even follow the regimen of good diet himself?

The knowledge contained in the scriptures is about the supreme Truth which is indeed imperishable. So one is advised to concentrate upon researching this ‘truth’ instead of wasting his time in reading about this truth again and again in numerous scriptural texts if even one has the potential to tell him about it!

These observations should be taken in the correct perspective. They are being addressed to a ‘wise and enlightened person’ who is expected to have realised the truth but fails to do so. It is to guide him that this verse is intended. This does not mean that one should not study the scriptures, or that one should throw the scriptures to the winds, or insult them in any way; no never in the least. This study should be continued till the time one does not get sufficiently knowledgeable about the Truth, but once that stage is achieved, then the scriptures would have served their purpose and now the time has come to implement that knowledge.]

24. Various righteous and religious duties and sacraments—such as doing ritualistic bathing, doing Japa (repetition of holy words or Mantras), doing Yagya (fire sacrifices

and other religious activities), going on pilgrimage to holy sites, etc. are needed and useful only till the time the essential sought after objective is not achieved (24).

[Note--And what is that objective? It is the realisation of the essential emancipation and salvation of the soul which translates into 'self-realisation'. This is because once self is realised, then there is no need of the scriptures, there would be no need for these physical exercises as listed in this verse.]

25. 'I am Brahm'—this is the basic, truly spiritual notion, the fundamental premise for the liberation and deliverance of the soul of exalted people who are adroit, enlightened, erudite and wise.

'This is mine'—this fallacious notion is the cause of all fetters that shackle a man. 'This is not mine'—this notion, on the other hand, is liberating and delivering for the soul of the man (25).

26. The notion of 'this belongs to me' puts a man in the snare that ties him to this deluding world of perishable material things, while 'this is not mine' sets him free from it; he is liberated from all worldly bondages¹. When the mind, intellect and the heart become indifferent to such notions, then the view of 'duality' vanishes²; everything becomes reduced to one and same immutable and indivisible essential entity that is the ultimate Truth (26).

[Note--¹This happens because when one thinks that a particular thing is his, he begins to worry about it, he becomes attached to it at an emotional level. This creates a bond between the two, thereby hooking the man to that thing which he begins to love. By and by he becomes so attached to it that he would weep if that thing is snatched away from him. He forgets what he has learnt from the study of the scriptures that the world and its objects are perishable, that all his relationships with the world and its objects are limited to the body and not his pure self, and therefore there is no cause for lamentations. On the contrary, a wise man must realise and understand that all these relations of the world that are established with the body are incidental for him due to fact that the soul is on its journey through this world riding in this body just like one rides a train or a motor vehicle. The body is only a temporary abode, a transit point for it. With this wisdom, all his illusionary attachments are dispelled. We must refer to verse no. 23 in this context here.

²This happens because in such a situation everything becomes one for the man. Such a man has equanimity and evenness of thoughts and perceptions, and such dispassion is only possible when the man sees the same underlying 'truth' everywhere and in everything in existence. Further, wisdom and enlightenment kindles honest renunciation towards worldly things in him, and he begins to treat them all alike.]

27. When a person becomes dispassionate and detached from anything pertaining to this materialistic world and remains indifferent to them, it is only then that he can attain the supreme, transcendental state of realisation called the 'Param Pad', or literally the stature which is the most exalted and the pinnacle of spiritual attainment. When such a state is achieved, then wherever the Mana (mind and heart) goes, wherever the mind fixes its self and the heart finds peace for its self, that place is the Param Pad for the person. [That is, during such a state of existence, wherever the man stays, in whichever state he lives, whatever he thinks, anything he does—all become equivalent to being in a state of eternal peace and bliss. None of them cause any restlessness in a self-realised person's mind and heart; he always remains unruffled and unaffected; he treats everything and every circumstance with equanimity and equality. Refer verse nos. 7-8 in this context.] (27).

28. The supreme transcendental Brahm is established here, there and everywhere. A person who does not realise the profound truth of the statement 'I am Brahm' is not able to find liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation in the true sense. All his efforts go in vain just like a person who is trying to punch the sky with a clinched fist, or a hungry person who tries to beat empty husk to extract rice grains from it. (28).

[Note—There is no use to vent one's anger at the sky by punching it, for it is sheer madness to do so for no one can punch against a vacant space to cause harm to it. Similarly, what is the sense of beating dry and harmless husk with the intention of getting rice grains from it because the grain has already been taken out from that husk. So a person who does not realise the great implication of the tenet 'I am Brahm' spends his life searching that eternal Truth which is present inside his own bosom as his own illuminated Atma which is pure consciousness. If he is foolish enough to try to find that Brahm in those things of the illusionary world that are perishable instead of in his Atma which is imperishable, then he is like that fool who is vainly trying to punch the sky and trying to find rice in dried out and empty husk.]

29. Anyone who studies this Upanishad becomes purified and holy just like the fire, the wind/air and the sun as well as Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer) and Rudra (Lord Shiva, the concluder). He is deemed to have taken holy baths in the holy sites, read and acquired expertise in all the Vedas, and is deemed to be the one who observes all the ordained religious sacraments, follows all the required vows and does all the mandated rituals as described in the Vedas. He is supposed to have read all the Itihas-Purans (Hindu mythological histories), and done Japa (repetitions) of one million Mantras of Lord Rudra—for he gets the same benefit as is obtained by any and all these things done separately as well as jointly.

He is blessed with the fruit (reward, benefit) equivalent to doing Japa using the holy ethereal Mantra pertaining to the divine Pranav (one of the names by which the attributeless and un-manifest Supreme Being is known), i.e. the Mantra 'OM', ten thousand times. Ten generations of his past ancestors and ten generations of his future descendents are purified (and made eligible for liberation because of their good fortune of having his constant contact, or being born in such an exalted household).

He acquires mystical powers to bestow auspiciousness and holiness to even those who sit with him, or have a chance of communion, contact or interaction with him. Hence, he is honoured with the title of 'Pankti Pavan', i.e. one who makes those who are in a queue, waiting for their chance to contact and interact with him, blessed with a bounty of auspiciousness and holiness. [That is, the entire congregation benefits by his presence because of the divine energy effusing from and radiating out from him and making the assembly bask in its spiritual warmth much like the sunlight that shines over the whole world equally, and they all benefit from his words of wisdom.]

He is great and exalted. He is exonerated from the horrendous sins as killing of a Brahmin, drinking wine, theft of gold, having sexual relationships with one's Guru (moral preceptor), or even having contact with such sinful people, or being an accomplice to commitment such great sins (29).

[Note—The last paragraph should be seen in the correct perspective. It does not give a blanket license to being sinful and pervert in the false belief that one's sins and misdeeds would be forgiven by simply reading this Upanishad. Nothing is more misleading than this! A person who is sincerely interested in his emancipation from his sins done in the past would endeavour to find out ways to repent for his past

misdeeds and amend his ways. When he thus begins his search, he comes in acquaintance with this and other such Upanishads that show him the way for liberation and deliverance. They in effect teach him that everything is not lost after all, and no time is too late for repentance and spiritual deliverance if there is the will and sincerity. This last stanza is to instill confidence in the sinner that he has at last found the medicine for his malady. He need not despair, he need not feel hopeless and hapless, he need not search anywhere else for redemption of his soul, for recension of his sins. His salvation is close at hand if he discreetly and diligently follows what is taught here. But he must be ware, for even a cursory reading of this Upanishad would make it abundantly clear that it is not so easy to implement what this Upanishad says. Merely looking at the medicine, its inherent powers and the knowledge of its chemical constituents would not cure the chronic disease if the medicine is not actually taken by the patient, and neither even taking it would help if proper medical guidelines are not followed regarding diet and lifestyle changes. Similarly, if the tenets of what is taught by this and other Upanishads are not followed properly and in a discreet manner, then it would be an exercise in futility. Implementation is more important than mere knowledge. That is why, verse no. 22 emphasises that mere reading of scriptures has no real benefit if they are not understood and implemented in life in a holistic manner.]

30. Such persons have the divine sight of the hallowed abode of Lord Vishnu, who is all-pervading and omnipresent through the length and breadth of the creation, in the form of the ubiquitous and diffused illumination that is uniformly spread in the 'Duloka', or the heavens (just like the sunlight radiates and uniformly illuminates all the visible world with its brilliant light) (30).

31. Such exalted and erudite souls (who spend their lives as prescribed in this Upanishad) are free from all spiritual lethargy, indolence and inertia; they are always diligent in doing the best and the most righteous things that are to be done. Consequentially, they are able to attain the abode of Lord Vishnu (the sustainer; the Viraat Purush; the Lord who is the manifested, macrocosmic and omnipresent Supreme Being representing Brahm), an abode which is the most exalted, supreme and the holiest of all the abodes.

OM salutations! Whatever is said in this Upanishad is verily the 'truth'; this Upanishad speaks the 'truth'. Amen! (31).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—13

BHIKSHUK UPANISHAD

The 'Bhikshuk Upanishad' is very brief, having only four short and one bigger verse. It basically deals with the characteristic features, virtues and way of life of wandering friars or monks who have completely renounced their attachments with the materialistic world and roam about freely for the dual purpose of the general welfare of the society which gains by their communion, as well as for the lifting of their own

self form a mere mundane existence to that which is spiritually exalted and elevating for their soul. Such people are called Sanyasis.

This Upanishad should be read in conjunction with other such Upanishads dealing with identical subject—such as Jabal Upanishad which is chapter no. 3, Paramhansa Upanishad, chapter no. 5, Turiyatita Upanishad, chapter no. 14 etc. of this volume. Even other Upanishads that are not directly related with the Sanyas way of life are very much relevant here, such as chapter no.12, Paingal Upanishad amongst others, because they describe the truthful knowledge pertaining to the Atma or soul, its salient features and characteristics, and how to attain eternal peace and bliss, emancipation and salvation, and such other matters which are at the core of all spiritual pursuits and the main objective of taking to the Sanyas way of life.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 of this volume for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. OM salutations! Those ‘Bhikshuks’, literally those who beg for food and roam about as friars, monks or mendicants, who aspire for emancipation and salvation of their souls have four basic categories—Kutichak, Bhaudak, Hansa and Paramhans (1).

2. The ‘Kutichak’ Bhikshuk takes only eight morsels of food¹ (or eight mouthfuls) and follows the path of Yoga² (i.e. the path of meditation and contemplation) to attain ‘Moksha’ (i.e. emancipation and salvation for their soul). Some examples of such Bhikshuks are—sages Gautam, Bharadwaj, Yagyavalkya and Vashistha (2).

[Note—¹This verse says that these Kutichak Sanyasis should take *eight morsels of food*. There is a lot of symbolism here—each morsel of food stands for one path; even as these eight paths of Yoga are self-sufficient for providing complete liberation and ensure deliverance of the aspirant’s soul from the traps in which it finds itself in this body living in a material world of delusions and sufferings, these eight morsels of food would sustain the aspirant in his spiritual pursuits.

It is not that a man should starve himself to death for want of food if mere eight morsels are not sufficient enough to sustain his body, for it has been elaborately explained in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 6, section 7 of the Sam Veda tradition (and included as chapter no. 2 of the volume in this series that deals with the anthology of Upanishads of that Veda) that the body needs sufficient food and energy to sustain itself and enable it to do its duty, one of them being to bear the Atma comfortably during its journey through this world, a journey destined for the Atma due to its past deeds. So the eight morsels (mouthfuls) of food symbolise the fact that a true monk and renunciate is one who treats food as a way to sustain his body so that it can help the Atma to pass the test of renunciation, to get the chance of atoning for its past misdeeds, and to prepare for its own emancipation and salvation by symbolically implementing the eight-fold path of Yoga by disciplining the body rather than to torture it and cause it undue suffering. Therefore, if the Sanyasi finds that mere eight morsels of food is not enough to make him sustain his body, he might consider taking in some extra food, but just enough the amount that is absolutely essential. Besides this, the restriction of eight morsels is to inculcate the habit of self restraint, self control and non indulgence in food. A monk or friar is not expected to put on weight and become lethargic due to excessive intake of rich food.

²The word *Yoga* has a broad ramification. Besides its conventional meaning of contemplation and meditation, it also implies the various paths that bring about a union between the

creature and the Supreme Being or Brahm. These paths lead to spiritual enhancement of the aspirant and help in his emancipation and salvation.

The eight-fold path of Yoga is the following—According to Patanjali who is considered to be the greatest exponent of Yoga, the latter consists of 8-fold path. These are briefly the following—(1) ‘Yam’ or self restraint; (2) ‘Niyam’ or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) ‘Aasan’ or postures for meditation; (4) ‘Pranyam’ or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) ‘Pratyahar’ or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) ‘Dhaarna’ or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) ‘Dhyan’ or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; and (8) ‘Samadhi’ or a state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation. In the present context, the Sanyasi must understand that each mouthful of food that he is taking must be used for the progress of his spirit on one of these paths of Yoga, and thereby come so much the closer to the supreme Brahm.]

3. The ‘Bahudak’ Bhikshuk holds a ‘Tridand’, a thin bamboo staff carried by a Sanyasi which has two other short pieces of wood, each measuring about four fingers in width, tied at the top end; it derives its name from the three controls that a true Sanyasi is supposed to observe—viz. control over his speech called the Vaag-dand, control over his body called the Kaye-dand and control over his mind called the Mana-dand), carries a water pot called the ‘Kamandalu’, sports a tuft of hair called the ‘Shiksha’ on his head (i.e. on the cranium), wears the sacred thread called the ‘Yagyopavit’ as well as ochre clothes called ‘Kashaya Vastra’.

They abstain from eating honey and meat, but except these two things, they accept any other type of food from the household of a person who is himself wise and exalted, well versed in the knowledge of Brahm, and is as noble as any other sage. [That is, the Sanyasi should not accept food from the house of those people who are known sinners and perverts.] He accepts only eight morsels of food and searches for Moksha (emancipation and salvation for his soul) (3).

4. A Bhikshuk called ‘Hans’¹ does not stay for more than one night in a village, five nights in a city or town, and seven nights at any pilgrim site. They symbolically partake as food cow’s dung and drink cow’s urine² to purify themselves.

They roam about adopting the vow called ‘Chandrayan’³, and diligently follow the path of Yoga in search of Moksha (emancipation and salvation for his soul) (4).

[Note—¹The ‘Swan or Hans’ is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is said to eat pearls, which means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various gems and jewels. It is also reputed to drink milk leaving aside the water content in it. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature’s inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks good of all, and his words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble.

The alphabet ‘Ha’ of the word ‘Hans’ is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which

connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa'.

Hence, the higher forms of mendicants are compared with this bird.

²Though they eat and drink like an ordinary man, but they taste these two things symbolically not only to purify themselves because the *cow's urine and dung* are considered purifying and holy, but also to prove that for them taste and nature of food matters not, and they treat everything alike, that they have truly overcome the natural instincts of the taste buds to yearn for delicious food and drink. This does not mean that, by being immune to taste or treating everything alike, they would also eat those things that are prohibited by the scriptures, such as meat and honey, though these two things are part of staple food for ordinary people. They, in short, adhere to the strict principles as laid down by the scriptures. Further, when they take such food, the people would try to keep a safe distance from them because of their unconventional and odd eating habits; this in turn would protect these Bhikshuks from being too intimate with any householder. It also helps them to purify themselves of any taint that might inadvertently affect them because of the tainted food got by them in the course of begging for food as it is not practicably possible to verify if the food-giving household is righteous and good or not as prescribed in verse no. 3 above. So, eating cow dung and sipping cow's urine is a gesture more of a symbolic nature rather than the actual eating or drinking them in the conventional term. It is more of a sort of symbolic purification rite, a sort of repentance for past indulgences and sins.

³The *moon* is cited as their ideal for the following reasons—(a) The moon is calm and soothing as opposed to the sun. So like the moon they also remain calm and provide peace and spiritual solace to others wherever they go. (b) The moon is always changing and never appears the same on any two nights. So they also change their location constantly as they do not have a permanent abode for themselves, and appear to be non-conformist and odd in their general behaviour as far as the world is concerned. (c) The moon is dark on the first night, then it gradually increases in its brightness and reaches its pinnacle on the full moon night, and finally begins to decrease in size and shape and brightness till it vanishes from sight altogether. So such Sanyasis also run their full course in their lives, taking birth as an obscure child in some household, acquire fame and glory till they reach their climax in adulthood, and then they start to move out from limelight and lead a life of renunciation and reclusion whereby their worldly pomp and shine symbolised by their worldly achievements, name, glory, majesty, wealth and prosperity begin to decline, and ultimately they completely vanish from the scene altogether when they shed their mortal coils. (d) There is another symbolism here. Even as the moon progressively goes on getting enhanced in size and shape during its first half of its cycle, the spiritual glories and powers that these Sanyasis acquire and possess go on increasing exponentially from day to day till they reach their best shine and zenith of glory when their fame and name is at its height, but then they realise that there is a day not too far when they would have to die. So they begin to retract themselves from exposure in this world, and gradually withdraw themselves into themselves. Finally, when the

time comes, they quietly dissolve into nothingness resembling the dark disc of the moon on the night of the dark moon. (e) But this does not mean that they have gone and their glory and achievements lost for ever, because the moon has actually not gone anywhere though it is not visible, as it reappears the very next night. Likewise, these Sanyasis also remain incognito but make their appearance when the time comes. (f) Like the ever-changing moon, they keep changing their location and external behaviour to ensure that they are not recognised by a person on two consecutive occasions; this is to ensure that they don't get attached to or infatuated with anyone. They wish to remain incognito and humble.]

5. The 'Paramhans' (i.e. the best types of Sanyasis amongst those who are called Hans as described in the previous verse) Bhikshuks also eats eight mouthfuls or morsels of food (just enough to sustain their life in their body) and follows the path of Yoga in search of Moksha (emancipation and salvation).

Some of the exalted Paramhans Bhikshuks are the following—Samwartak, Aruni, Shwetketu, Jada-Bhagat, Dattatreya, Shukdeo, Vamdeo, Haaritak, etc.

They reside under the shade of a tree, an abandoned house, or the cremation ground. They can wear a cloth or even remain naked. They are not too obsessed about what is Dharma and what is not, about what is beneficial and what is not¹.

They do not believe in the dual concept of something being pure and another being impure. They do not distinguish between earth (mud), stone (gems and other precious stones) and gold (the most precious of worldly assets).

They beg for food from the house of all castes or creeds without making any distinction, because they perceive the same Atma which resides in their own bosom as being present everywhere else also (i.e. in all the creatures, and therefore in each member of the society, whether he belongs to a low class or a high class).

They are (innocent, care free and uncorrupt) like a newly-born child². They are without any mental and emotional perplexities and agitations. They have no confusions and doubts to disturb their calmness of demeanors. They have no attachments and longings of any kind. They are ever engrossed in righteous, noble and auspicious thoughts. They are firm in their conviction about the truthfulness of their Atma. They beg for food just to sustain their life till its time is up.

While doing so, they spend their time living in an abandoned building, a temple, a hut, near an ant hill, under the tree, near a potter's house, the site of a fire sacrifice, banks of a river, a mountain cave, a hillock, a valley, near a water fall or a natural spring, or any such uninhabited, secluded and serene place away from the hustle and bustle of mundane world.

They remain pure, untainted and uncorrupt; they spend their lives like a 'swan', remaining pure and immaculate, selecting those things that are considered the best and the noblest of the lot available to them, and leaving behind the rest as worthless. Finally they abandon their gross physical bodies at the time of death to attain the final emancipation and salvation for their souls.

Such a person who adheres to the auspicious path and eclectic norms of Sanyas³ as enumerated above is indeed known as a 'Paramhans'—verily, this is the affirmation of this Upanishad. Amen! (5).

[Note--¹That is, they treat everything with equanimity; for them whether anything is righteous and auspicious or not matters little because they treat all circumstances and events alike and make no distinction between them. All conduct and behaviour are the same for them for the simple reason that they are ever engrossed in contemplation upon the pure conscious Atma and the supreme transcendental Brahm and are the least bothered about what the body does. Since their mind and intellect are

constantly involved in righteous thoughts, there is no question of unrighteousness ever tainting them, and therefore all their deeds and words become exemplarily auspicious and virtuous.

²That is, like a newly-born infant, they are mentally innocent and free from all worldly cares and worries as well as corruptions and taints that lead to various worldly faults and delusions which afflict adults and are so characteristic of the people who are engrossed in this world and its affairs. A child is considered pure in heart; it is basically unattached with anyone but appears to be so endearing towards all and easy to please with the slightest show of affection. The child does not even know how to get angry, and even if it does its anger is very superficial and short-lived; it would eat anything offered to it by anyone; it would talk with anyone who has the inclination to do so, not distinguishing between two people and not treating anyone as either a friend or a foe; it has no passionate attachments with or hatreds towards anyone. In short, the Paramhans Bhikshuk is just as pure and innocent as the infant just born or a very young child.

³True Sanyasis have risen above all mundane considerations of the world as well as their bodies. They have realised the falsehood of both, and therefore bother about none. That is why they pay scant attention to their behaviour or taking care of their bodies. They literally give two hoots to what the world says or thinks about them, or what would happen to their bodies in the absence of proper care. They are the least worried as to what would happen to the body after their death, such as its last rites and its cremation. This is because for them the body was merely a vehicle to carry their own self, the Atma during its sojourn in this world, and therefore there is no reason to worry unnecessarily about the body. Further, this stanza also means that they have strictly adhered to the tenets of the Sanyas way of life, i.e. they have been true to the vows they had taken when they had renounced this world and had decided to spend their rest of the life as a wandering friar or monk or mendicant, and therefore at the time of death they have nothing to fear about. They have at last reached their destination, and it is time to celebrate.

The reader is advised to read chapter no. 12 of this volume, called Paingalopanishad, canto no. 4 in the context of this Upanishad because the thought processes of a wise, enlightened and self-realised friar or monk are beautifully described in that Upanishad. It would be then clear why such people attain final emancipation and salvation, besides throwing light on their high thinking processes.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—14

TURIYATEET UPANISHAD

This Upanishad is also known as TURIYATEET-AVADHUT UPANISHAD. It incorporates a conversation between the creator Brahma and Lord Narayan, who is the Viraat Purush, the Supreme Being, and also known as Vishnu. Narayan is also the father of Brahma because the latter had emerged atop a divine lotus sprouting from the navel of Narayan or Vishnu.

In this Upanishad, Brahma asks Narayan the path to be followed by seekers of emancipation and salvation. In his answer, Narayan enumerates all the salient features, characteristic behavioral norms, temperaments and natural inclinations, the

thoughts and emotions etc. of those people who are spiritual pilgrims seeking the supreme Truth about the divine Being who is the universal consciousness of creation much like the Atma is the individual consciousness of the seeker. It is a journey of self realisation leading to its ultimate goal which is attainment of final emancipation and salvation of the creature.

The name of the Upanishad is derived from the word 'Turiya' which is the 4th state of existence of the pure consciousness. The word 'Atit' or 'Ateet' means 'free from, transcendental, and beyond'. Therefore, the composite word Turiyateet would refer to that state of existence of the Atma or pure consciousness that has gone beyond all the four states of existences of the Atma, and hence would be the 5th state of its existence. It is the state which goes beyond the perception of ordinary bliss and happiness; it is an eclectic state of perpetual and eternal spiritual beatitude and felicity from where there is no return. It is tantamount to final and ultimate liberation and deliverance of the soul of the creature. A Turiyateet lives in a perpetual state of Samadhi, which is a trance-like state of total indifference to everything; it is a state of total neutrality; it is a state of higher level of transcendental existence which is steady and perpetual and marked by extreme bliss, beatitude and felicity.

The other name 'Turiyateet-Avadhut' has the word 'Avadhut' in it, and it means a renunciate Sanyasi, a Parivrajak, a friar, a monk, a mendicant or an ascetic who is considered as the best amongst this class of spiritual seekers, and therefore said to be the one who has reached the pinnacle of spiritual upliftment whereby he remains submerged in an ocean of fathomless ecstasy and bliss, remaining engrossed in a perpetual state of contemplation and meditation. Though visibly he might not seem to be a realised man, but a true Avadhut is an exalted soul, a self-realised and an enlightened person par-excellence who has witnessed Brahm first hand. This Upanishad is dedicated to such a person.

--- Shanti Paath---

The meaning of the Shanti Paath is given in appendix no.1 of this anthology.

1. Once, the patriarch of creation, Lord Brahma, approached his father Lord Narayan (Vishnu or Viraat Purush) and asked him, 'Oh Lord! What is the path of 'Turiyateet Avadhut', and what are its salient features; what are the characters of those who tread this noble, auspicious and virtuous spiritual path?' [1].

[Note---The Atma or the soul which is the pure self of the creature has three states of existence —the waking, the dream and the deep sleep state of consciousness. There is a 4th state also, and it is called 'Turiya', which is obtained as a result of going beyond the 3rd stage of deep sleep, and it is a permanent state of bliss and felicity. Beyond this 4th state is the Turiyateet, literally the state which is beyond the Turiya state and in which the Atma (pure consciousness) is free from all the encumbrances and characters displayed by it during the other four states. Therefore, Turiyateet would be the 5th state of existence of the Atma.

In the present context a bit of explanation is called for as follows:

The brain has two components—the intellect and the mind. The former is under the direct control of the Atma while the mind is subordinate to the intellect. The mind receives worldly stimuli through the sense organs, passes them to the intellect, obtains instructions from the intellect and passes them on to the organs of action — this state prevails when the man is 'awake'.

Now, when he is asleep, there are two stages —either he dreams or he does not. During the 'dreams state', the inherent Vasanas (the hidden passions, yearning and

desires) come into play at the sub-conscious level and the mind lives up to all those Vasanas in an imaginary world. But when there is no dream, i.e. during the ‘deep sleep state’ of consciousness, the Atma is freed from interference and it reverts back to its original form of being ‘nothingness, having no feelings and no emotions’, just like the case wherein the mirror is removed from the front of a man and his image vanishes from it and the image reverts back into its primary source or object, which in this case is the man himself whose image was formed in the mirror. The Atma is an image of the supreme Brahma. When the mirror of the mind-intellect is removed, it (Atma) reverts back into its primary form which is Brahma whereas it related itself with the world when the mind-intellect was in active mode. So, the aspect of ‘sleep’ discussed in this section is the ‘deep sleep state of consciousness’, because it is in this state that the creature comes in direct contact of his true identity or true self, which is called Atma or pure consciousness. The creature is ‘delinked or uncoupled’ from the external world while sound asleep.

For the external world, a sleeping man is as good as being dead. For example, if a sleeping man is attacked by someone, he won’t resist; he won’t even know what has happened just in front of him while he was asleep. He is not medically or conventionally regarded as dead, but for all practical purposes ‘he is as good as dead’. He neither feels pain nor happiness when in a deep sleep state of existence, which is beyond the dream state of sleep. The ‘deep sleep state’ is also called ‘Swaprant’ (स्वप्नान्त), literally meaning to be in one's own territory, to dwell in one's natural habitat. In this state, the gross body consisting of the sense organs and the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex remain shutoff, and the Atma residing in the causal body remains absolutely calm and peaceful and oblivious of the turmoil of the external mundane world. To be in this state perpetually is the natural habit and nature of the Atma, and therefore it finds this state its natural habitat. It is like being in a state of suspended animation or a self-imposed state of coma when the creature remains indifferent to what is happening around it and instead remains cocooned in its own shell. It is like a state of being virtually dead, or coming to a stage voluntarily which is almost like being dead, but is not actual death.

During the Turiya state (i.e. the 4th state) of existence of the consciousness, the Atma lives uniformly in all the other three states, viz. the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleeping. It is not limited to one or the other state, and therefore would display all the signs that are unique to each of these states taken separately as well as in a composite manner. In the Turiya state therefore the man would display the combined character traits that are the result of a combination of all the individual traits of these three states of existence. Beyond this is the Turiyateet state (i.e. the 5th state) in which the Atma goes beyond the restrictions and limitations of the other four states, and therefore it becomes free from any of their encumbrances. This is a state in which Brahm exists and his realisation is possible. It is the pinnacle of spiritual pursuits, the highest rung that one can climb before all spiritual achievements bear fruit, and which would enable the aspirant to come face to face with Brahm, i.e. become Brahm-realised. It helps the spiritual aspirant to witness and experience Brahm first hand.]

2. Lord Narayan replied to him, ‘Those who walk on the eclectic spiritual path known as ‘Avadhut’—i.e. those who sincerely and honestly take the vows of the highest form of ‘Sanyas’ by renouncing the pleasures and comforts of this material world, who completely snap all their ties with the latter, who cheerfully embrace all the gravest of difficulties encountered during the pilgrimage seeking the ultimate Truth and the divine knowledge of the Supreme Being, who stick to it loyally, faithfully and unwaveringly, who are inspired and motivated and have exemplary courage, fortitude and resilience, and who actually succeed in it by the dint of their honesty—are rare indeed! Such people are an exception rather than the norm.

If by chance one is fortunate enough to become one such exalted soul, or comes in contact with one such true, sincere and honest Avadhut, then it is expected that one knows his basic qualities, behavioural norms and other characteristic features so as to recognise him as Brahm personified or as a Brahm-realised person, which are in brief as follows:--He is always pure, uncorrupt and clean (mentally, bodily and mentally); he is an image or personification of the glorious virtues of renunciation, dispassion, detachment, indifference, non-involvement and non-indulgence; he is enlightened and self realised as well as a personification or a living embodiment of (all the tenets, maxims and axioms enshrined in the canons of) the holy Vedas. This is the considered opinion of the wise ones. Such a great and exalted soul constantly keeps his mind and thoughts focused and firmly rooted in me (the supreme Lord), and therefore I find my abode in him (i.e. in his heart). [2].

3. A Sanyasi (i.e. a renunciate and reclusive monk, a friar, a hermit, a mendicant or an ascetic who has rescinded all his attachments with the mortal world of material sense objects) passes through four primary stages in his spiritual pursuit as an ascetic. These phases are the following:---‘Kutichak’ in the beginning, followed by ‘Bahudak’, later on by ‘Hans’, and finally by ‘Param-Hans’ states of Sanyas. [These stages and their characteristic features have been elaborately described in other Upanishads on the subject of Sanyas.] [3].

4. A true Sanyasi contemplates and ponders deeply into the underlying reality, truth and substance of all that he beholds in this world. His self inspired deep research provides him with an insight into the uselessness of external pretences which he regards as superficial, deceitful, imposter, hypocrisy and cheating one’s own self. He realises that there is no real need for external formalities in the journey of self realisation of the ultimate and unequivocal spiritual Truth in creation. In fact, they are only impediments creating various hurdles which are best avoided; they create an unnecessary sense of un-fulfillment, perplexity and agitation for the creature¹.

With this self realisation and enlightenment about the ‘truth’, he symbolically lays to rest or discards all his external symbols of Sanyas---such as his staff/scepter/rod, the water pot, the waist band, the loin cloth, and the piece of cloth draped over the upper part of his body as an over-garment. He also simultaneously does away with his routine daily religious rites, such as the purification rite, observing the different sacraments and offering of oblations and libations along with prayers three times a day (called the ritual of ‘Sandhya’ when prayers are offered at dawn, at noon and at evening hours), doing fire sacrifices etc. In order to free himself from these formalities, he offers all of them to a clean water body, such as a pond, a river, a lake or any other water body available at hand.

Having discarded all worldly paraphernalia (i.e. all external signs) of Sanyas which are like a burden for him, he becomes completely ‘Digambar’—literally one who is naked and wears only the vast, open sky, the Firmament, as a sheet to cover himself with. [Here it means that he has freed himself from all formalities and encumbrances which shackle him down to specified rituals instead of freeing his soul to choose its own path.]

His sense of non-attachment and non-collection reaches its pinnacle when he discards even tattered garments made from patted bark of trees and leaves sewn together with twines, or even a hide of an antelope (or deer skin which is generally carried by hermits to serve a dual purpose of a seat as well as a blanket to cover the body).

He stops following any set rules, regulations or norms of behaviour and conduct (such as offering regular prayers, libations, oblations to the holy Gods or the sacred fire, repeating the Mantras or taking the purification bath, getting regularly shaved, using any cleansing rub to scrub the body clean while bathing, and applying the Tilak mark which usually consists of three lines marked on the forehead and called a 'Tripund').

He even abstains from doing all formal religious deeds ordained by the Vedas for an ordinary man to make him righteous and noble as well as to inculcate virtuousness in him. [This is not to demean the sacrosanct authority and supremacy of the holy Vedas, but because by the virtue of his self realisation and enlightenment, he has passed that stage when a person must obey the doctrines of the Vedas to enable him to follow a righteous and auspicious path, as that aim has already been achieved by him. The objective of the Vedas is to kindle enlightenment, wisdom and self realisation so that the creature is able to break free from the fetters that shackle it to the cycle of transmigration, a cycle of horrors and torments, of miseries and pain which are basically caused by the ignorance of the reality and truth behind the external façade of creation, and instead find eternal peace and happiness by understanding the 'truth'. As a true Sanyasi has accomplished this objective, there is actually no need for him to observe formalities any more.]

In short, he discards all his mundane worldly obligations and abstains from doing both the righteous, good and auspicious deeds as well as the unrighteous, bad and inauspicious deeds. [That is, he becomes neutral, indifferent, equitable, unruffled and unmoved under any given circumstance. Equanimity, calmness and evenness of temperament, perpetual fortitude, resilience and forbearance, become his hallmarks. He does not differentiate or stops to see the difference between any two deeds or actions; for him both are the same. This is the high watermark of enlightened conception of 'non-duality'. He has become 'un-involved'.]

His state of existence has reached that pinnacle when there is no need either to follow/pursue any knowledge or remain in oblivion in ignorance. [That is, since the aim of knowledge is to enlighten and empower a person by removing his ignorance, that purpose has been fulfilled for an enlightened man when he honestly renounces the artificial and deluding attractions and enticing temptations of the entrapping world, and instead takes to the path of Sanyas. That's why emphasis is put on sincerity and honesty while taking the vows of Sanyas, as otherwise the man would be open to temptations and there would be reasonable chance of his falling down from his path. To fall will be more disastrous than not taking Sanyas at all, because the fallen man would take others along with him when he sinks like a boat which drowns all its occupants when it sinks! This is because the people look up to the Sanyasi for moral and spiritual guidance, treat him as an example to emulate in their individual lives, and have the greatest of faith, trust, honour and reverence for him. His falling would be devastating for the entire society around him. It would be shattering for the whole august institution of Sanyas.]

That is, in brief, he rises above all criteria and norms of worldly behaviours and conducts that are classified as good or bad, righteous or unrighteous, normal or abnormal. [4]

[Note---¹When a *Param-Hans Sanyasi* does not have to bother about any formalities; he has no tensions and obligations. He does not have to bother whether or not a particular rite or sacrament has been properly done according to set norms. This frees his mind from being bogged down in mundane ritualistic formalities and carrying out of religious routines, and instead allows him to concentrate his time and energy on higher things of the spiritual realm for which he has taken Sanyas in the first place.]

5. He overcomes the various adverse factors of life that create so much agitations, restlessness and vexations for an ordinary man, factors which cause so much misery and torment for the body and the mind, such as extremes of heat and cold, happiness and grief, honour and insults. He burns his so-called three *Vasanas*¹. He remains calm, unruffled and unmoved in the face of criticism or praise. He burns all the negative traits such as (a) false pride, ego, vanity and arrogance, (b) jealousy, envy and ill will as well as hypocrisy, deceit, imposterism and pretence, (c) self praise, self adulation and pride of self, (d) desires, wishes, aspiration and yearnings, (e) animosity, hatred, ill will, malice and jealousy which lead to anger, vehemence, wrath and vengeance, (f) greed, rapacity, yearnings and avarice which are the cause of all worldly attachments, delusions and ignorance, (g) joys, happiness, elation and exhilaration as well as intolerance, fanaticism, bigotry and jealousy, (h) a tendency to find faults with others and pricking holes with them, and (i) to be paranoid and have a desire to protect oneself from physical harm by hurting the opponent in a compulsive pre-emptive way, merely on suspicion, even before the latter actually hurts the former. [5].

[Note---¹The three *Vasanas* are the various attractions and passions that form the integral and inherent nature and temperament of a creature and determine its behavioral as well as mental conduct. They can be briefly summarized as follows :--- (1) *Vasanas* that create a deep sense of attachment with, or a great desire and yearning for the comforts and pleasures of the body and gratification of the sense organs, (2) *Vasanas* that create the various inclinations of the 'Mana' or the mind and intellect complex that govern emotions and thoughts, and (3) *Vasanas* that create attractions for the world. *Vasanas* cover in their ambit the deep desire to excel in the scriptures and be recognised as a scholar and be sought after as a renowned preacher or theologian, which begets fame and honour. All these are broadly classified as *Vasanas*. Therefore, *Vasanas* are of three types:--- (a) 'Lok Vasana' (लोक वासना) — meaning a craving for the world, its objects, fame and material acquisition, (b) 'Deha Vasana' (देह वासना) —bodily pleasure and comfort as well as self gratification, and (c) 'Shastra Vasana' (शास्त्र वासना) —a desire to learn more and more of the scriptures and be called a learned, scholarly person, an expert, leading to fame, glory and wealth. See also chapter no. 3 of this anthology titled Jabal Darshano-panishad, canto 2, note to verse no. 59-61.]

6. He treats his body as no better than a corpse. He does not make any efforts or struggles to have any type of worldly gains because he treats gains and losses alike with fortitude and equanimity. Living a humble and peaceful life like that of a cow, he accepts whatever comes his way and remains contented with it. He overcomes all forms of greed and yearnings (such as for name, fame, money, honour), and buries or relinquishes or forgoes all the benefits and glories that accrue to him on account of the special skills, expertise, scholarship and erudition that he might possess. [That is, once he takes the holy vows of *Sanyas*, he stops treating himself as a learned man or a skilled craftsman, and for that matter any vestiges of his previous phase of life should be forgotten for good. He should have nothing to do with his earlier life before he took to *Sanyas*. He treats himself as a king who has abdicated his throne and relinquished all his rights over the kingdom and its attendant privileges.]

He leads an anonymous life, hiding his earlier identity. [For instance, if he was a king, he wanders incognito even in his erstwhile realm like an ordinary mendicant or friar, begging for food and living an ascetic's life of hardship and sufferance.] He

treats all alike, whether they are lowly or of a high stature. For all practical purposes, he outwardly appears to be ignorant of the niceties and courtesies of the world; he does not bother about formalities and decorum of the external world, because for him all are alike, without any distinction [6].

7. Being firmly convinced and being of a firm faith that the supreme, ultimate, all-pervading, omnipresent, almighty and eternal Authority of this creation is the non-dual entity called the 'Atma', the pure consciousness, he believes that there is nothing besides his true 'self' (i.e. the Atma). He conceals the great secrets and eclectic but esoteric truths about divinity and spiritualism in his bosom. [That is, he does not overtly boast of his spiritual prowess, mystical powers and divine assets, he does not beat the trumpet of his enlightened stature, and prefers rather to keep mum about them. This enables him to remain anonymous and avoid publicity which prevents him from being bothered by people flocking to him to seek his intervention and blessings for their worldly problems, thereby disturbing his peace of mind and serenity. Consequentially, since he is wise, enlightened and self-realised enough to see the futility and falsehood of this body and the external world, he does not get perturbed and restless during sufferings caused by grief and sorrows, nor does he feel elated, glad and happy under favourable circumstances.

He does not believe in having any kind of attachment with anything, nor does he consider anything as being auspicious or as inauspicious (because for him all are equal, all are alike). All his sense organs (of perception and action)¹ have attained a state of perpetual neutrality, worldly inactivity and profound renunciation—they have no desires left in them, they have calmed down and taken to virtual retirement, as it were. [7].

[Note---¹There are five organs of perception—ears, nose, eyes, tongue and skin, and five organs of action—mouth, hands, legs, genitals and excretory.]

8. He does not recollect anything pertaining to his past life, his educational scholarship, his religiously ordained moral duties and responsibilities which are collectively called his 'Dharma'. He also never thinks of early powers, influences, authority, majesty and glories so much so that he now discards all formalities and norms of conducts and behaviours associated with humdrum routine of life in this world. Since he treats both the day and the night equally (and sees no difference between these two artificial time zones), he never sleeps, literally though. [That is, he is always alert and vigilant against temptations and pitfalls in his spiritual path. He never allows lethargy and indolence to get the better of him. He remains equally alert and careful while dealing with things for which darkness of night is a metaphor, such as any worldly delusions and temptations that might come his way, or for which the brightness of the day stands, such as basking in the glory of fame, name, honour and respect that may be heaped on him by the virtue of his being an exalted Sanyasi.]

He remains always on the move; he never stays at one place for much long as it is said that a Sanyasi who stays at a single place for long becomes polluted and unclean like the stagnant water of a pool. This water gets covered with scum and algae. On the other hand, the water of a moving river is deemed to be clean and considered even holy. Besides this, a moving ascetic can spread his spiritual warmth and blessings to benefit mankind if he goes from place to place [8].

9. The only thing that remains with him is his body. [Obviously, the pronoun ‘him’ refers to the Sanyasi’s true-self which is his Atma and not his physical gross body. The Atma needs the body to live in as long as its journey in the mortal world is not complete.]

Any water body (e.g. a pond, a lake, a river, a stream etc.) is like his water pot. [That is, he need not carry any separate pot or vessel to collect and carry water for drinking and other essential purposes, for whenever he feels the need for water he can directly take it from these natural sources. To drink he can use his cupped palms to lift water; for bathing and other purposes he can take a dip in the water source itself.]

He always remains calm, composed, unruffled, poised and tranquil internally, but externally or overtly he behaves erratically, unpredictably and unconventionally like a child, or even like a deranged man or a fiend. Adopting this unconventional demeanour, he wanders alone silently, all by himself, not talking with anyone, remaining penitent, reclusive and forlorn. [There is no wonder in it as which civilized person would like to talk with such a taciturn, indifferent and unresponsive man who behaves in such a funny manner. But this is a wise ploy used by the Sanyasi to avoid company of worldly people which could cause disturbance to his calmness and peace of mind and heart.]

He remains engrossed in himself, always contemplative and pensive. He thinks about his ‘true self’ and its stupendous, magnificent and fantastic nature. Being unattached and unconcerned, he forgets about everything else [9].

10. In this manner, a friar who is known as an exalted ‘Turiyateet-Avadhuth’ is firmly rooted in and has a firm conviction about the supremacy, irrefutability and inviolability of the ‘non-dual’ concept of the ultimate and transcendental Truth which is the actual Reality in this creation, the truth and reality sans all deceit and conceit, all falsehoods and pretences. This Truth and Reality is called ‘Pranav’ or ‘Brahm’. He becomes oblivious of even his own body and eventually discards it also. With this last hurdle/obstacle out of the way for his ‘spirit’ (i.e. his Atma), he feels relieved of all encumbrances associated with the compulsions to possess a body which was like a burden for him which he has now got rid of. Thus he feels fulfilled and accomplished. Verily, this is the teaching of this Upanishad [10].

---Shanti Paath---

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CHAPTER—15

ADHYATMA UPANISHAD

The ‘Adhyatma Upanishad’, as the name suggests, deals with the spiritual, eclectic knowledge of the supreme and transcendental Atma or the divine soul of a creature which is pure consciousness and Brahm personified. It is, in other words, the study of the pure divine self. It pertains to the spiritual study of the various facets of the Atma which is the true, pure, uncorrupt conscious ‘self’ of the creature. The awareness of the essential truth about the only one, immutable, immaculate, conscious and eclectic entity called the Atma, which is the supreme universal Soul of the entire creation, is the culmination of the spiritual pilgrimage of the seeker.

Built around the philosophy of the Atma, this Upanishad covers a wide range of metaphysical concepts that encompass almost all matters that relate to the pure consciousness. It goes on to expound the magnificent and divine virtues of Brahm, the 'parent' of the Atma (in its verse nos. 61-64).

Being one of those rare Upanishads which have been revealed by a divine source, this has been preached by Lord Shiva, the most enlightened and self-realised God amongst the Trinity Gods (i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva). Hence, it is deemed to be highly spiritual in content and eclectic in nature, revolving around the fundamental principles of metaphysics and spiritualism.

This Upanishad has a high metaphysical quotient and is Atma-centric. It enumerates the characteristics that define a man who has understood the true meaning of the Atma as pure consciousness of the individual creature as well as of the Atma as the supreme, transcendental, cosmic consciousness called Brahm. The language used is straightforward and succinct; the concepts encompass the whole gamut of metaphysics that relate to the Atma and Brahm. This Upanishad lays great stress on the supreme and exalted stature of the Atma. It enumerates how a man can live a normal life in this world and still remain untouched by its entrapping web. Accepting the fact that the true identity of a creature is the conscious Atma rather than the gross body, that the Atma is pure and uncorrupt, that it is eternal, universal and an embodiment of bliss and happiness, that it is the lack of correct wisdom and insight into the reality that is at the root of all (emotive, conceptual, spiritual, intellectual) problems and perplexities faced by the creature, this Upanishad summarises at one place the profound doctrines, the axiomatic tenets and irrefutable maxims of the Upanishads and the Vedas in a simple, succinct and lucid manner.

The Atma is has no birth, because it is imperishable and eternal. It pervades uniformly everywhere, because it is the ubiquitous, all-pervading and omnipresent ethereal spirit. This Upanishad exhorts the aspirant to rise above the mundane considerations of the gross body and the gross world, both of which are perishable and illusionary. Relying upon the great maxims and axioms of the Vedas regarding the Atma, such as 'I am that', 'that is me', 'that essence is nothing but me' etc. the seeker should research further about this truth, delve deep into its profound secrets, unravel them, and thereby experience and witness the truthfulness of these great sayings of the scriptures.

He should strive in his spiritual pursuit to go beyond the three normal states of existence of a creature—such as the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep state of consciousness—and reach the transcendental state called 'Nirvikalp-Samadhi' wherein he becomes perpetually engrossed in a state of meditation, resulting in perpetual bliss. In such a state of existence, the creature is in direct communion with the Atma, and he does not have any further mental link with the external world (which is the reason of his obtaining perpetual bliss). This state of trance called 'Samadhi' is like a spiritual fire sacrifice because now the seeker offers everything he has, at the mental and emotional level, to the Atma and consequentially obliterates his independent external identity altogether. It is a most sublime and holy form of fire sacrifice and it leads one to the accomplishment of his objective of finding liberation and deliverance while he is still alive in the world. This is a unique state of existence called 'Jivan Mukti'. It is said that the effects of the past deeds and the different inherent tendencies, temperaments and inclinations that form an integral part of the thought processes and behavioral patterns of a person affect only those people who erroneously think that their body is their 'self', and not those who de-link their 'self' from the body and treat their pure conscious and immaculate Atma as their

‘true self’. This is because the deeds are done by the body and the inherent tendencies and temperaments of a man guides his mind and intellect, and through them his behaviour. Both these entities—the mind and the body—are distinct from the Atma. So there is no cause why the faultless and immaculate Atma can be accused of doing such and such deed and suffering from its consequences. Finally, in the concluding verses (nos. 55-70), the thought processes of a truly self-realised and enlightened man are enumerated. The last verse lists the name of the chief sages who were the great exponents of the philosophy propounded by this Upanishad.

This profound Upanishad is very similar to Subalo-panishad which is chapter 6 of this anthology.

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--Shanti Paath—

The meaning of the Shanti Paath is given in appendix no, 1 of this anthology.

1. Inside the deep cavern of the subtle heart there lives a unique, marvelous, eclectic and sublime entity which is one of its kind, is eternal and does not therefore take a birth, and is stable, uniform, unchanging and universal.

The ‘earth’ element is its body; it lives diffused uniformly inside this element as its integral part, but the irony is that the earth does not know about it and is unaware of its presence. [The entity referred to here is the magnificent ‘Atma’¹.]

Similarly, the ‘water’ element is its habitat, it always lives inside this element, but the latter does not know it and is unaware of its presence.

It inherently resides in the ‘Tej’ that exists in the creation (the virtues of energy, vitality, vigour, radiance, splendour, glory, majesty etc. that are present in the creatures of this creation; here referring to the ‘fire’ element). Therefore, the ‘fire’ element represented by the Tej of creation is its body, but the latter is unaware of its presence. In other words, the fire element or Tej does not know that the fierce potentials, the stupendous glories, the majestic powers, the heat and the energy that it possesses is due to that one single marvelous entity, the Atma, present inside it.

It (the Atma) is uniformly and universally present in the ‘wind’ element, diffused throughout it; the wind is its body, but the latter is oblivious of this fact; it does not know that the entity that lends it (i.e. the wind) its magnificent glories, its legendary potentials, its stupendous powers and lethal force is that one, single, unique and supreme divine entity (called the Atma).

The ‘sky’ element is its body; it is subtly and imperceptibly present in the whole of the space present in the cosmos, diffused uniformly in it, but the sky element does not know of it, or it is unaware of its presence as its integral part.

The ‘Mana’ (mind and heart; the thoughts and emotions of a creature) is its body, it lives in it as its integral part and its driving force, but ironically the Mana does not know about it.

The ‘Buddhi’ (the virtues of intellect, discrimination, wisdom, rationality, logic; the rational part of the brain) forms its body; it forms an integral part of Buddhi, it drives the Buddhi, it is uniformly present in the virtue known as Buddhi, thereby imparting the latter its stupendous and magnificent potentials and prowess, but the Buddhi does not know about it and is even unaware of the fact that all its fantastic glories and majestically magnificent powers are because of that supreme entity called the Atma present in it.

The element or factor of 'Ahankar' (ego, pride, haughtiness, hypocrisy, vanity) is its body, it lives in it, but Ahankar does not know this fact².

The 'Chitta' (discriminatory intellect, memory, the faculty of reasoning and understanding, the sub-consciousness) is its body, it forms an integral part of the element called Chitta in a creature, but the latter does not know about it.

The 'Abayakta' (that which is not manifest, not described, has no attributes, is imperceptible, and is unformed) is its body; it resides uniformly diffused throughout the Abayakta, but the latter does not know about it or its presence within it.

The 'Akshar' (literally that which is imperishable; the eternal and ethereal word OM) is its body; it pervades uniformly throughout it, but the irony is that the Akshar is oblivious of it, it does not know about it³.

The 'death' is its body, it (the Atma) subtly lives inside 'death' as its sole driving and empowering force that enables it (death) to bring to an end everything that exists in this creation, but mysteriously the death is unaware of it⁴.

The entity referred to in all the above instances that lives inside these different elements and virtues that together constitute the creation as their integral constituent part, and empowers the former to carry on the myriad functions of the latter, is none but the supreme, transcendental, sublime, subtle and indefinable Atma. This Atma is the supreme seat of power and authority. It is the dynamic force that empowers, motivates and drives everything in this creation—from the subtlest to the grossest. It is the latent but powerful energy that drives the dynamo of the cosmos. It is the 'Atma' or the soul or the secret of the vitality, life, vigour, vibrancy, force and dynamic energy of all the creatures as well as the world in which they live.

This Atma is sinless, immaculate and irreproachable; it is without any kind of inauspiciousness and unrighteousness in it, having no taints, blemishes and faults of any kinds. It is literally the only divine, magnificent, radiant, glorious and splendorous supreme Lord of creation called Narayan.

The gross body and its sense organs (of perception and action) are not the Atma; they are completely and definitely separate and distinct from the Atma. They should never be clubbed with the Atma. To treat them (i.e. the body and the organs) as 'me or mine' is an absolute erroneous thinking and absurd proposition; it is stupidity and fallacy of the highest order. This fallacious and misleading thinking should be assiduously forsaken; it should be abandoned forthwith because it paves the way for spiritual downfall. That is why those who are wise, erudite, learned and enlightened should discard this erroneous and faulty thought process with the aid of truthful and correct knowledge of Brahm.

[This verse is almost identical with what has been enunciated in Subalopanishad, canto 7, verse no. 1, as well as Braihad Aranyaka Upanishad, canto 3, Brahmin 7. These two Upanishads appear as Chapter nos. 6 and 2 respectively of this volume.] [1].

[Note---¹The word *Atma* referred to in the text here as well as in other Upanishads in general refers to the 'soul' and the 'spirit' of anything. Let us examine these two words to arrive at the fundamental meaning of the word Atma. The word 'soul' literally means life; that conscious and eclectic entity which thinks, feels, desires etc.; ego ; a spirit embodied or disembodied; innermost nature or being; that which one identifies oneself with; the moral and emotional nature, power and sensibility; an expression of the spirit; a complete embodiment or exemplification; an element; the essence; a fundamental aspect or nature; a basis or basic ingredient, constituent or aspect of any entity; the indwelling or animating principle; the imperceptible, invisible and subtle force that enables any entity to move, to be inspired, to be animated.

The word *spirit* literally means a vital principle; the ethereal soul which is de-linked from the gross body; an incorporeal being; that entity which actuates emotions, feelings, dispositions, frame of mind; the mettle and verve; the real meaning and essence; the implied authority that is behind everything; the breath; the breath of the vital wind; the subtlest essential principle present in the body of a creature; that essential invisible entity that has a real existence apart and distinct from matter; liveliness as opposed to indolence and inertia.

With this broad scope of meaning of the word Atma, the implication of the verse becomes clear. All the basic elements of creation, such as sky/space, wind/air, fire/energy, water and earth, all the qualitative aspects that determine the natural temperaments and behaviours of any creature, such as its level of ego and pride (Ahankar), the quality of its mind, intellect and heart (Mana), its faculties of discrimination and reasoning as well as the sub-conscious intellect and memory (Chitta and Buddhi), and in fact the whole creation itself, both at the macrocosmic, invisible and indescribable level/plain (Abyakta) which is imperishable and immortal (Akshar), or at the microcosmic, visible and describable level/plain (Vyakta) of the individual creature who is perishable and mortal (subject to death)---all these have any value, any relevance, any importance and any meaning whatsoever only till the time the Atma resides in them and is at the helm of their affairs. As soon as the Atma---the fundamental spirit or soul that drives and lends life and meaning to anything---leaves any of these entities, they cease to have any relevance, meaning or value.

The Sanskrit word ‘Atma’ should therefore invariably be understood in its wider meaning in the context of the combined meaning of the twin words ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’.

²This stanza should be properly understood. *Ahankar* as such is a negative trait, and the Atma being immaculate and pure cannot be expected to have even the slightest of any kind of negativity. Atma cannot be tainted with Ahankar. Like any other character or virtue which determines the nature of a person and drives his behaviour, Ahankar is also one of them. Anything that has the potential powers and is authoritative enough to be able to determine the course that those under its influence would be inspired or motivated or forced to take must surely be senior in administrative hierarchy because it has a particular decisive and driving capacity and the necessary authority vested in it, though in this case it is of a negative hue. From where has this Ahankar derived its powers and authority? Or what is that force that empowers this trait to become active, potential and effective? The answer is –‘the Atma’. We see here that the word ‘Atma’ encompasses in its ambit even such abstract conceptions as force, vitality, vigour, strength, potentials, ability, empowerment, energy, drive etc. in their highest powers and magnitudes. In short, anything which shows any sign of life and activity must have the Atma in it as its ‘active ingredient’. The Atma is like the ‘electric’ that drives huge motors; everyone knows how electric is generated, how it is transmitted, what potentials it has and how anything that runs on electricity would just not function without it, but can anyone actually ‘see’ it; can anyone ‘catch hold’ of it? Even in the rare case when one tries to do so in his stupidity, he gets the jolt of his life if he manages to survive the shock! Anyone who attempts to see it gets blinded by its dazzling spark and radiance, and it is evident when one watches a welding machine at work. Electric is man made, and if it can have such stupendous glories, imagine what greater potentials can the Atma have which is the boss of the man who created electricity. Even as it is not possible to ‘catch’ electric, it is also not possible to ‘get hold of’ the Atma! And even as the presence of electric can be witnessed when an electric motor runs with it, it is also possible to witness the presence of the Atma in this creation when one sees the vibrant and colourful living creation around him. Just like the fact that no one has physically seen the electric but its dynamic existence and stupendous potentials cannot be denied, the existence and the astounding powers and potentials of the Atma too cannot be denied though it cannot be actually seen.

³*Abakyaata* (un-manifested and attributeless entity) and *Akshar* (imperishable; the eternal word) are only some of the virtues of the supreme Brahm who is the cosmic Atma. In essence, these two stanzas imply that the Supreme Being exhibits the ethereal and mysterious virtues of being un-manifest inspite of being present everywhere, and of being imperishable though the creation in which it uniformly pervades is perishable. This paradox is unique to the Atma; no worldly logics can be made applicable to the Atma.

⁴That is, *death* does not know that the supreme Authority that has empowered it to carry out the function of bringing about an end of anything is known as the Atma that resides in its very bosom, as an integral part of its being, and no where outside. The ‘death’ erroneously thinks that it is him (death personified) who brings to an end the life of a mortal creature, but it is actually the Atma that enables it to do so. Without the supreme Authority known as the Atma, the ‘death’ would have neither the strength nor the mandate or the ability to end or conclude anything.]

2. A wise seeker should endeavour to know about himself, about his truthful identity which is the Atma. He should experience and witness and perceive its sublime presence first hand. This Atma is only a witness to what the intelligence does and what the various *Vrittis* (inherent tendencies, inclinations, temperaments and nature) of a creature inspires it to do. [That is, an enlightened and wise person is one who understands instinctively that his Atma or soul or the ethereal spirit is his ‘true self’, that the Atma does not actively participate in the deeds and actions of the gross body that it does under the instructions of the mind tampered and conditioned by the various ‘*Vrittis*’ inherent to a creature.]

‘That Atma is me’—being firmly convinced of this supreme axiomatic tenet of the holy Vedas, he should disassociate himself from all material objects of the artificial and deluding world, and concentrate his energy on his ‘true conscious self’, which is the Atma [2].

3. One should forsake the pursuance of this material world of artificiality and delusions as well as the perishable body along with its organs of actions (i.e. hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory) and of perceptions (eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin). Not only this, but one should also leave aside too much enthusiasm in pursuing the scriptures. [That is, he should not waste his precious time and energy in trying to master all the scriptures in order to be recognised as a renowned scholar, or trying to find the essential truth by delving in the maze of voluminous scriptures because he would get lost in them. The essential operative doctrine of the scriptures has been made known to him in the form of the great sayings, such as ‘that is me’ of verse no. 2 above. Then say, what is the purpose, need and idea of studying the vast and unending scriptures if one does not have any faith in their tenets which have been made easily known and accessible to him. One of the main reasons why he reads and reads the scriptures throughout his life is his remaining unconvinced as to what they say, what they teach. He tries to see if the other scripture says the same thing or not. This is where he lands in grave trouble—because all the scriptures use different languages in their attempt to present the same eternal Truth as viewed from different angles and different perspective. The net result is that the same universal and irrefutable Truth assumes various shades and hues of meaning and interpretations, leading to endless confusions, doubts, schisms and dichotomy.]

So this verse essentially advises a wise seeker of Truth that once he has understood the principal doctrine and grasped the fundamentals, once he has comprehended the essential teaching of the scriptures, he need not waste time in

verifying whether all of them say the same thing or differ in their version, because then he begins to have doubts about the truthfulness of what he has learnt in the first place. So he should not be tempted to verify the veracity of the teaching of any one given scripture by comparing it with that of the other, because as has been said above, they all speak about the same thing but from different perspectives and viewing angles, and thus there is bound to be variations. Only persons with requisite wisdom, erudition, sagacity and intelligence would see the basic truth from different angles and would enjoy this kaleidoscopic spiritual panorama without getting distracted and confused, but for ordinary souls this multi-pronged approach is best avoided. The likelihood of ordinary person being easily led astray is bolstered by the fact that they have already fallen an easy prey to the delusions of the world though they have been taught again and again to be wary of it. But when the same scriptures are read by wise and enlightened men, their faith and convictions get firmer and bolder; they are reinforced and made stronger because such sagacious and erudite people are not led astray by words and phrases but read between the lines to understand the basic fundamentals; they can think for themselves, deduce the truth, and arrive at the reality.]

When he has attained a higher state of enlightenment, he should discard any remnants of misconceptions about his 'true self'. [3].

4. Always remaining rooted (i.e. having a firm belief and being steadfast in one's conviction) in his pure conscious self, the enlightened Yogi (a realised ascetic) treats everyone as an image of the same Atma/soul that resides inside his own bosom. [This is the holistic non-dual enlightened view of creation.] He takes help of rational reasoning and logical thinking based on the teachings of the scriptures, on what he has heard from and been taught by his learned teachers as well as by persons senior and wiser to him, and what he has personally researched, witnessed and experienced, to arrive at this conclusion of the non-dual perception of the world. This eclectic and sublime view removes narrow minded thinking and myopic vision from the perceptive and emotive radar of the Yogi; he becomes large-hearted and a fount of equanimity and fortitude [4].

5. He (a wise ascetic) should be very vigilant against various temptations that may swerve him from his chosen path and faith. He should guard against and be wary of excessive sleep, worldly gossip and useless chatter which are faults of the faculty of speech and lead the intellect astray. Instead, he should remain centered on his Atma to the exclusion of everything else [5].

6. This physical body is produced from the excretory products of the parents, the father as well as the mother. [The semen of the father is mucous-like and it is expelled out of the body through the same opening by which urine, which is another excretory product, is passed. Similarly, the female ovum is a product extracted from the body fluids of the mother; the embryo lies in the filthy environs of the womb, surrounded by mucous, blood and the slimy embryonic fluids. The creature emerges through a passage designated for passing of urine in the female, i.e. the vaginal opening. How much deplorable and abhorable, unholy and despicable is this body!]

This unholy body is a bundle of flesh and excretory matters. One should treat it as an 'untouchable' and 'impure' entity like an out-caste Chandal, and therefore abhor it, loathe it, discard it, forsake it and distance oneself from it, having nothing to do with it! He should stop treating his body as his 'own-self', and instead identify

himself with the sublime, majestic, honourable, revered, transcendental supreme entity known as Brahm [6].

[Note—When a wise person realises the dirty and contemptible origin and nature of his body which is a product of lowly ingredients, was nourished and developed in filth and un-hygienic conditions of the womb, was born through a hole by which urine passes, and which itself is a bag full of filthy matters such as mucous, urine, stool, blood, flesh, muscles, cartilage, bones, pus etc., he begins to loathe it. Which civilized man in his senses would be expected to touch such a bag in his home or office? A wise man thinks—‘I am noble and honourable because I am the reverend Atma which is an image of the supreme authority of the creation, Lord Brahm. How can I even think that this unholy and disgraceful body can be ‘mine’, and worst still, can be ‘I’?]

7. Oh sage! Even as the ‘Ghata-kash’, the subtle space within an earthen pot or pitcher, merges or coalesces instantaneously and uniformly in the vast space element present outside the vessel when it is broken, the enlightened seeker should also merge or dissolve or coalesce his microcosmic individual Atma or soul seamlessly, effortlessly and uniformly with the macrocosmic universal Soul or the Atma of the cosmos. With this, he would become eternally peaceful and calm [7].

[Note---It is very easy to visualise how it is possible. The Atma is represented by the Pran of a creature; this Pran is nothing else but the vital wind called the breath or life of a creature. When a creature dies, it sheds the body and the vital wind comes out of it. Since ‘wind or air’ occupies all space available, it is also treated as being equal to the subtle space element present both inside and outside of the body. With the limiting factor of the gross body removed from intervening between the Atma of the individual creature and the Atma of the universe present outside the body of the creature, it is obvious that both mingle with each other. And since both are of the same essential principle, they merge indistinguishably with one another.

The Atma is the eternally free ethereal spirit habituated to remaining free and unshackled. Now, when it has entered the physical gross body of the creature, it is akin to tying down a strong stallion that has never learnt to be fettered. For the Atma, the body becomes a prison with strong foreboding walls. The Atma feels like a caged bird. In this situation, the eternally free Atma which has never learnt to be under fetters or shackled to anything gets restless and perturbed. It feels frustrated, agitated and dismayed, always trying to find out a way of its dilemma and bondage.

Another reason for its restlessness is the horrible state of the habitat (in this instance, the cell of the prison, the stable of the stallion or the cage of the bird) in which it finds itself. It is dirty and filthy; it is stinking and full of rubbish. Naturally then, when it gallops away to freedom when the body is discarded at the time of death, the Atma would find its lost peace and happiness, and would abhor doing anything that would land it once again in that stinking dungeon (gross body of the creature) once again. But now, here is the catch. This freedom would be permanent only when the Atma has realised certain basic facts—such as the horrible filthiness and horrifying agonies of the body in which it lives if it takes a birth as a creature once again, and the reason why it had to live in such a body in the current birth in the first place. It would certainly not like to come back to it. It would then realise that it were the deeds it had done earlier besides the various yearnings and desires it had for the material world that were the cause for it having to enter the despicable body as a creature.

But suppose the Atma could not realise this profound truth about the cycle of birth and death, and suppose it was made to live in air-conditioned comforts in this world, then it would long to come back again and again. This latter case is a metaphor for the Atma which is deluded by the material comforts and pleasures of the world and remains engrossed in gratifications of the sense organs of the body. In this case, it

would regard the body as a boon rather than a curse, and consequentially would yearn for coming back. It would forget in the process the interminable and countless horrors that it had to suffer in the gross body, right from its conception in the womb till its old age and final death. Further, worldly enjoyments are short-lived and transient as they depend upon the body which is perishable and short-lived, besides being a storehouse of filth and garbage (see verse no. 6). There is no comparison of this transient joy with the eternal joy and happiness that comes with spiritual enlightenment and self-realisation, because then the body along with its accompanying horrors would have become redundant. Such an enlightened Atma is worthy of attaining Mukti—both Jivan Mukti as well as Videha Mukti.]

8. A wise ascetic who realises his true self as an illuminated and enlightened being who is self created (having no parents or any physical cause for coming into being), is self established (needing no one to support and no foundation to rest upon; being self sufficient and self enabled), and is the eternal, imperishable and universal Atma, should discard the external gross material world—extending from its macrocosmic, colossus and endless form called the vast Universe, right up to its miniscule, microcosmic form called a ‘Pinda’ (literally a ball made of cereals which is offered to dead ancestors)---as a pot of garbage or a packet of rubbish (which are disposable and dispensable). [8].

9. Divert your sense of ego and pride pertaining to this body away from it, and instead focus it on the Atma which is eternal and everlastingly blissful and pure consciousness. [That is, one should be proud of the fact that he has such a high pedigree and heritage as the supreme, transcendental Atma. He should feel honoured and privileged to have such an exalted Authority and conscious entity like the Atma as his true identity instead of being literally dishonoured and demoted by being associated and identified with the body which is filthy, perishable and gross.]

Consequentially, you must forsake your association with what is known as ‘Linga’ or the perishable gross organs of the physical body, and instead of it you should divert your attention to the ethereal, sublime and eclectic Atma or soul so as to become one with it. In other words, stop treating your body as your ‘self’, and start identifying yourself with the Atma [9].

10. Oh the righteous, auspicious and sinless one! Just like the case when one can see the large scene of a city as a reflection in a mirror held in the hand, you should endeavour to see your ‘true self’ as the reflection of the supreme Brahm (in the mirror of your intellect held in the hand of your wisdom and enlightenment). This divine and ethereal view would make you feel overwhelmed with contentment and fulfillment. [10].

11. A person freed from the bondage of Ahankar (false pride and ego) is able to accomplish realisation of the ‘true self’, which is the Atma (that has no such negative traits as ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy, collectively called Ahankar). Such a person becomes glorious and majestic like the magnificent full Moon which is regarded as a metaphor for and an epitome of bliss and peace, and is illuminated with a soothing bright light symbolising these virtues [11].

12. Termination of all deeds, i.e. not getting emotionally and mentally involved in any deed pertaining to this material, entrapping and deluding world, helps in elimination of worries and anxieties, which in turn help to destroy Vasanas (literally the various

passions, yearnings, lusts and desires pertaining to this world and its material objects and deriving self gratification). Elimination of Vasanas is equivalent to Moksha (final emancipation and salvation of the soul). It is called 'Jivan Mukti'¹ which refers to being liberated from the fetters that shackle a creature's Atma to the entrapping world and delivering it from its attendant horrors and torments while the creature is still alive in this world, has a physical body and does necessary deeds that are expected of him. [That is, if a person is able to vanquish his worldly passions and desires, if he has developed true wisdom that enlightens him on the false nature of the world and inspires him to do what is expected of him in a dispassionate and detached manner, both mentally and emotionally, he is able to overcome all sorts of avoidable worries and anxieties. Consequentially, he finds blissful peace.] [12].

[Note--- ¹There are basically two types of *Muktis*—(1) Jivan Mukti, and (2) Videh Mukti. A person who has attained Jivan Mukti--which implies that he has obtained liberation from the fetters that shackles a creature to the body and the external world and has found deliverance from its horrible torments (Mukti) even while he is alive and has a body (Jivan)—is deemed to have tasted that elixir (Amrit). He physically lives in this world but remains oblivious of it.

Videha Mukti is higher than Jivan Mukti. While Jivan Mukti implies that a wise and enlightened man has become detached from and indifferent to the external world by the virtue of his disassociation from the deeds done by the body though he seems to continue to enjoy living in this world but only in a perfunctory manner, thereby breaking the cycle of deeds and having to bear their fruits, Videha Mukti refers to the eclectic state when he is not even aware of the presence of his body. He feels no pain, no comfort, no bodily urges and no encumbrances pertaining to the body whatsoever. Further ahead on the spiritual path would be the Videha Mukti which comes with complete abandonment of the body by moving out of it by doing certain Yoga exercises or as a result of natural death of the body. These two concepts are not exclusive to each other but go hand in hand, for to attain Videha Mukti one must first become Jivan Mukti because it is only when one has broken free from the fetters that shackle the soul to this cycle of life (birth and death) can he expect to attain Videha Mukti which literally translates into liberation without the attending impediment of the body.

The concept of 'Jivan Mukti' and 'Videha Mukti' has been elaborately described as a note to verse no. 19 of Shattya-yani Upanishad which is Chapter 18 of this anthology, as well as in Muktiko-panishad which is Chapter 19.]

13. He who perceives the supreme, transcendental Brahm everywhere in all the moments and in all the entities, and whose conviction in this regard is firmly and unequivocally established---the Vasanas (worldly passions, desires, lust, yearnings) of such a man dissipate and gradually vanish. [13].

14. A sincere seeker should not allow himself to be bogged down in myriad confusions and doubts causing bewilderments and mental faults of judgment such as committing of errors and stupidity in perception about the material and mundane world along with emotional involvement in it, because these negative traits are equivalent to spiritual death. This is the wise and considered advice given by experts of 'Brahm Vidya', which is the truthful knowledge pertaining to matters concerning the supreme and transcendental entity called Brahm. [14].

15. Even as the layer of moss and scum (called Shaival) covering the surface of water (in a pond) is removed temporarily when an attempt is made to clean the surface, for it comes back and covers it once again, an intelligent and wise seeker should be aware

of the fact that even a slightest distraction which could deviate him from remaining focused on Brahm can cause the veil of Maya (delusions, ignorance, illusions, and hallucinations caused thereby) to cover and subdue him from all the sides once again. [That is, constant and persistent vigilance is needed. There should be no let up in alertness on the part of the spiritual aspirant; he should guard against all overt as well as covert temptations.] [15].

16. An enlightened man who has attained the exalted state of 'Kaivalya' while alive (literally the state which is one of its kind; the ultimate state of non-duality when distinctions between the self and the other person, the individual self, the soul of the creature, and the cosmic Self or the universal soul, are extinguished or removed), also remains 'Kaivalya' (i.e. the only one) even after death¹.

Hence, oh the sinless and auspicious one! You should remain steady and unwavering in your firmness of conviction, faith and belief regarding the concept of non-duality (of the Atma), a conception that is unique, has no alternatives, and which is the only and ultimate state obtained by Samadhi. [16].

[Note---¹While an enlightened man is alive, he treats himself as the Atma which is distinct and separate from the gross body. This Atma is unique and non-dual. When he dies, the only difference between the two states (i.e. being alive and being dead) is the removal of the intervening body from the scene. After death, the Atma finds the surrounding space of the vast sky as its body in which to dwell. Incidentally however, the Atma and Pran are synonyms; that is, both are the invisible manifestation of the wind or air element of creation which 'breaths' life into an otherwise lifeless creature. The 'sky' is the habitat of Brahm, the universal Soul and the cosmic Atma. The Atma is also a microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic Brahm. Hence, the enlightened seeker is therefore the same after death as he was before. Previously he was the microcosmic individual Atma, and after death he becomes the macrocosmic universal Atma. Since the Atma is only one and not two, hence both the situations are the same for him.]

17. When the non-dual Atma can be perceived through the medium of remaining firm in one's conviction, faith and belief about the non-dual uniqueness of the pure self, the conscious Atma, it is then that all the knots and knars of the heart representing all sorts of delusions, illusions, ignorance and misconceptions are untied, dismantled, flattened out and got rid of; they literally lose their distinctive existence and become indistinguishable from the universal Truth. Or in other words, they dissolve and merge into nothingness. [That is, once self realisation becomes firmly established in one's heart and mind, all misleading conceptions and fallacious thinking, causing all sorts of perplexities, bewilderments, consternations and confusions, become defunct and irrelevant. The heart and the mind become smooth and placid like the surface of a mountain lake.] [17].

18. One should be unwavering and firm in his conviction of the supremacy, the sublimity and the eternity of the Atma; one should have unflinching faith in it. He should forsake such negative traits as Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance, vanity and hypocrisy) which act as drags or impediments in his spiritual pursuit and enhancement just like one remains indifferent to useless and worthless things like old utensils and worn-out clothes (which are old, out of use and are disposable, or lose their attraction when one acquires new ones). [18].

19. All distinctive attributes, forms, definitions, names, epithets, titles, honours and designations that are assigned to all components of all denominations in this creation, extending from Brahm right up to a small twig standing on the ground, are fundamentally misleading and fallacious; they have no truth, pith and substance in them. [That is, to assign any name to anything of this creation, to describe it as having a particular set of qualities, characteristics and virtues, to distinguish one entity from the other on the basis of certain features, is an erroneous and fruitless effort because whatever is seen in the physical world is illusionary and deluding, and all the various definitions and attributes that are assigned to a given object are simply imaginations of the fertile and deluded mind. Why? Because the basic element that is present uniformly in all that exists in this creation is the non-definable Atma which has no attributes, no definitions, no designations, no physical qualities and characteristics that can be quantified and qualified. Besides this, the same Atma lives in all the entities in this world. It is like the case of golden ornaments—though the external shape and design of each piece of ornament is unique and distinct from the other, basically they are all ‘golden’. Their intrinsic value and importance comes from the amount of gold content in them, though externally embellishments do have a certain role to play. But suppose the metal gold is removed from them, would they still be called golden? Certainly not. Suppose gold is replaced with, say, platinum, then the value and importance of the same ornament undergoes a drastic change. The same logic applies here. If the underlying conscious factor is removed from the world, it would lose its sheen and charm, its basic worth. For example, a creature’s body remains the same before and after his death, but in the latter case it starts to rot rapidly because the Atma has gone out from it. No comparison can be made between a dead body and a living body.]

With this erudition and wisdom, one should constantly, consistently and persistently see his own Atma (i.e. the pure conscious self; the soul) everywhere, in everything. [That is, the same Atma has revealed itself in myriad of forms of this creation. The dynamic energy that drives the dynamo of the world is the Atma, and this dynamo turns the wheel which produces the forces called, amongst others, electricity that in turn assumes so many forms such as kinetic, heat, light, sound etc.]

This Atma is universal, complete, indivisible and irrefutable; it is stable, unwavering, uniform and eternally present. [19].

20. The Atma (pure consciousness; the soul) is verily itself Brahma the creator, it is Vishnu the sustainer and caretaker of the creation, it is Indra the Lord of all the Gods represented by the sense organs of the creature, it is Shiva the concluder, it is the World as it is known, and it is all that exists besides them. There is nothing aside of ‘the pure conscious self’. [20].

21. To falsely imagine that the gross material things of this world are actually present in the incorruptible Atma (like the erroneous idea of a snake in a lifeless piece of rope) is nothing but a false accusation on the incorruptible and truthful Atma; this false accusation has no substance and truth in it. Once this fallacious and erroneous conception of the mind is erased, the unequivocal truth about the Atma or the ‘pure self’ emerges—that it is self contented, complete and fulfilled, that it is non-dual and without a second, and that it does not get involved in doing any worldly deeds (and therefore remains indifferent to what the body does, simply because the Atma is a distinct entity from the body). This ‘self’ is none other than the supreme, transcendental and sublime Brahm personified. [21].

[Note—Verse no, 19-21 should be properly interpreted and understood. These verses basically say that the operating force in the whole living world is the Atma. This Atma is like the ‘energy’ that has so many forms and names, such as electric, light, heat, sound, kinetic, atomic etc. The dynamic energy only changes forms according to the requirements of a given situation, but none of the various forms into which it changes cannot be called some or other form of ‘energy’.

Taking an example from the physical world around us, to say that the filament of an electric bulb is the electric or light or heat energy because when one touches it one gets the shock of electric, or one sees it glowing with a dazzling light, or one feels the heat when one touches it, is a ridiculous proposition. As it is obvious, these forms of energies are latently present in the bulb, only they reveal themselves when the circumstances are favourable. Similarly, to catch hold of any gross object and say that it is the Atma is as foolhardy as holding a bulb and saying that one holds electric.

Further, it is also erroneous to assign any specific name to energy and say that it is superior to other forms of energy. These definitions have been conceptualized to facilitate understanding, and not to create any demarcation on the basis of superiority or define the truth about the entity called energy by assigning any name or quality to it. Energy can be experienced and witnessed in its myriad forms. Quite similarly, the ‘truth’ about the Atma can be experienced and witnessed, and the tool for it is Gyan or the truthful knowledge based on erudition, wisdom and deep insight into reality.]

22. The appearance of diversities, differences, variations, alternatives, alterations and changes in the perceptions about the Atma—which is one, un-debatable, unique, steady, unchanging, uniform, immutable and indivisible—are fundamentally erroneous, fallacious and misleading. Such misconceptions create delusions and hallucinations about the reality. They are not the absolute and irrefutable truths because wherever there is any chance or scope of differences or variations or schisms or dichotomy about that which has no faults of any kind, is immaculate, is unaltered, immutable and uniform, which has no shapes, contours or forms, and which is the almighty entity having no attributes and physical virtues to define it and delineate it—in all such instances, one has not understood the truth, one has not found the real thing. Such a person is certainly deluded and hallucinating, thinking that what he perceives, what he knows, what he understands, what he thinks and what he deduces is the correct thing, whereas in reality it is not [22].

23. This eternally enlightened and pure conscious Atma is beyond the purview of being called a ‘seer’, the process or act of ‘seeing’, and the object that is ‘seen’. [That is, the Atma neither sees, nor does it qualify to be called perception of sight or the object that is seen. It is not the animate being who sees anything, as a active doer of deed or taker of any action; it is not the physical exercise of doing a deed consisting in the present case of the activity of seeing, as a verb; and it is not the gross inanimate object that is seen, as a passive target or object of perception. These three aspects of creation—the doer, the actual deed, and the objective or target of the deed—are not applicable to the Atma. It remains aloof from them. This triad of a doer, the deed, and the objective/target of the deed do not affect or influence the Atma in the least.]

The Atma is innocent and faultless and taintless; it is wholesome and complete, and it is as vast, fathomless and measureless as the heaving and surging ocean at the time of the doomsday. [23].

24. Even as darkness vanishes in the presence of light, the causes of all misconceptions, delusions, illusions, hallucinations, errors, doubts and fallacy dissolve in the supreme, sublime and ethereal Essence that is unambiguous, unique

and non-dual. That supreme, essential and basic entity is almighty and all powerful; it is without any attributes, and it is not the subject for assigning any characteristics and definitions. So where is the cause of emergence of any kind of differences, doubts, variations, alterations or diversities in it? (Refer verse no. 22.) [24].

25. How can any kind of dichotomy, variation, schisms and sense of duality leading to all sorts of doubts, confusions, errors, delusions and perplexities be ever present in that eclectic entity which is supreme and transcendental, and which is unequivocally only one, uniform, universal, immutable, indivisible and non-dual?

There is only peace and bliss during the deep sleep state of consciousness called Sushupta¹. Who has ever had doubt in it; who has ever seen (visualised or witnessed) different emotions in such a state? [That is, no one experiences sorrows, anguish, pain or sufferance when he is fast asleep, which is called the state of deep sleep in Vedanta.] [25].

[Note---¹An example will make the concept clear. When a man is terribly sick and suffers from bodily pain making him restless and agitated, in he manages to fall into deep sound sleep, then till the time he sleeps he has no feeling of any pain or anguish. He lies absolutely calm and peaceful as if there is nothing wrong with him. Likewise, the creature witnesses the bliss and peace associated with the Atma during the deep sleep state of consciousness. So the Upanishad seer cites this example of a soundly sleeping man to illustrate the unequivocal truth about the Atma's peaceful and blissful nature.]

26. The root cause of all differences, errors and schisms in perceptions is a faulty Chitta (the faculty of reasoning and rationality; the discriminatory intellect; the mind-intellect complex, specially the part of the brain that pays attention to any subject, analyses it and stores information for future reference, thereby having a conditioning effect on the working of the mind; memory and sub-conscious). If there is no such thing as a faulty Chitta, there would be no cause of any errors and fallacies, any differences and doubts, and no scope of schisms and their attendant confusions. There would be no alternatives and there would be no debates regarding various opinions, views and perceptions. Hence, in order to avoid this pitfall (of a faulty Chitta) leading to all sorts of perplexities and consternations, one should lay the Chitta to rest in the self evident supreme Soul called Parmatma, or the transcendental Atma [26].

[Note—The inputs from the external world are analysed by the brain. It makes its own deductions after paying attention to how a certain event of the external world seems pleasant or not to the creature. Relevant information is stored in the memory bank of the mind. All future actions of the creature would then be conditioned by this memory bank and the data stored in it. Therefore, if a creature does not allow the Chitta to interfere with the working of the mind and intellect, then there would be a commensurate lesser conditioning of their working. Hence, the way the creature sees and interprets newer events in future would consequentially be free from any previous conditioning of the mind-intellect by the Chitta. The mind-intellect would in this case be free to take its own decisions. That is why the Upanishads lay so much stress on annihilation of the Chitta, as this would provide peace, tranquility and stability to the mind-intellect as well as to the creature.]

27. Realising that this eternally blissful Atma is one's 'true' self and identity, one should enjoy seamless bliss both on the outside as well as in the inside of the Atma. That is, one should realise that to be perpetually happy and contented, while awake or sleep, or under all circumstances whether favourable or unfavourable, is tantamount to being one like the Atma, to being similar in virtues to the Atma, to being realised

about the Atma. [That is, in this state of Atma-realisation and self-awareness, there is no scope of and any place for lowly and degrading emotions to have any kind of presence, any kind of importance and any kind of relevance whatsoever.] [27].

28. The reward of having Vairagya (true renunciation, dispassion and disenchantment with the material and perishable world) is called true Bodh (meaning enlightenment, realisation of the ultimate truth and reality). The reward of Bodh is Uprati (meaning total detachment, dispassion and indifference to the objects of sensual pleasures and material comfort in the world; it also refers to overcoming the desires for gratification and possession). Finally, the reward of Uparati is attainment of profound calmness, peace, serenity and tranquility derived from contentment and realisation of the pure, blissful 'self'. [28].

[Note---When a person comes to understand the selfish, deceitful and cunning nature of the world, he becomes disenchanted with it. He realises that what he thought gave him happiness and pleasure is only serving its own agenda, its own vested interest. Even the happiness is transitory because the end would be grief and sorrow. When he realises that this is a trap laid out for him like the bait given to a fish or the trap laid to catch a bird, he begins to see through the deceit of the deluding and entrapping world, and consequentially starts shunning it. All his desires to acquire that object and possess this thing ends. This disenchantment leads to profound renunciation; it creates dispassion and detachment in the person towards everything pertaining to the material world, thereby preventing him from falling prey to worldly temptations. Such a truly realised person would rather purposely tear himself away from it while there is still time for him to make amends and make good his escape just like a man caught by thieves tries to run away from them at the first opportunity before they are able to pin him down. And how he runs! He would bolt away like a colt, never to look back again. When this happens, there would be no need for him to get anxious and upset to meet his aspirations and expectations because he would have none to pursue. Obviously with no deadlines and targets to meet, he would be relaxed and be at ease. This rejuvenates his sagging spirits, and he finds eternal and all-encompassing peace much more profound and vast than an overworked executive can ever hope to get when he retires to the sylvan surroundings of a hill with undulating green meadows, a gurgling stream, rustling of trees and chirping of birds!]

29. Anything which does not lead to something that is higher, greater and better, something that is more ethereal, divine and sublime, something that is spiritually enhancing, will have no value in the eyes of a wise and discriminating man. It is futile to pursue such a thing¹. To be dispassionate and detached from objects of gratification, comfort and pleasure in this materialistic gross world is akin to being fully contented and satisfied, while the beatitude and felicity obtained by communion with the Atma, which is the pure self and pure consciousness as well as the fount of eternal bliss, is indeed matchless and unique, fantastic and magnificent. [29].

[Note---¹When a student studies in a college or a school, he goes to the next higher class after passing through the previous class. Gradually, he pursues some professional course that can give him a good job and a comfortable life. Say, what is the use of studying any subject which cannot help him find a decent job and a livelihood to feed his stomach and sustain his family? All his efforts would be futile if this purpose is not served. This example would sum up what is said here. What is the purpose of studying the scriptures if one does not understand what they basically mean to say? If he does not allow himself spiritual upliftment, if he shuts his eyes to the light of truth, then say what the use of his studying the scriptures is. What is the use of consulting a doctor if one doesn't follow his instructions about the medicines?]

30. The supreme entity that has a mysterious form and which is a maverick player that can assume any form or shape it wishes, and hence is honoured by the title of 'Maya personified', the entity that is the cause of this entire creation and nourishes it in its womb, the entity that has the virtue of being, *inter alia*, omniscient and all knowing as well as being omnipresent and all pervading, the entity that is cognizable and apparent everywhere, is evidently almighty, strong, potent and powerful, and the entity which is unequivocally truthful and absolutely real—such an exalted and unique entity is identified by the general word 'Tat' or 'that is' or 'it is'¹. (This entity is known as Brahm.) [30].

[Note---¹The word *is* indicates the assertive presence of an entity which is attempted to be described by using such attributive words as Maya personified, the cause of creation, omniscient and omnipresent, almighty, truthful and real etc. The word *it* indicates a neuter gender, for that supreme entity has no gender. It is an abstract entity, an intangible and neutral entity which is difficult to understand and comprehend by the mind and intellect complex. The word *that* indicates the entity which is the object of spiritual quest as well as the subject matter of scriptural study. Brahm is just a name given to 'that' supreme entity which possesses all the glorious virtues enumerated by all the scriptures, and is beyond the purview of the mind and intellect to grasp. Actually, that transcendental Supreme Being has no defining names and attributes. It can only be accepted as a matter of fact and truth, a matter of belief, faith and conviction.]

31. The phrase 'It is me' is meant to indicate the presence of that supreme entity (as described in verse no. 30, and which is known as the universal Truth called Brahm in the shape of pure consciousness that pervades throughout the length and breadth of the entire creation) in the bosom of the individual creature, but without proper enlightenment and erudition this may appear to be a lopsided notion, creating an erroneous (and often times haughty) perception of what actually constitutes the 'self'. On the other hand, when true enlightenment dawns about the presence of that supreme all-pervading entity in the inner self of the creature, marking its 'true self' or 'truthful identity', it is only then that the real meaning of the term 'Twam', or 'that is you', is made known to the spiritual aspirant [31].

[Note—In simple terms it means that when a creature identifies himself using the words 'I' and 'me', which are first person pronouns, he has a wrong notion about himself, for in this case he thinks that his gross body is his true self, his own self. Even in the case when he is better evolved in wisdom and says 'my soul or Atma' is 'me', he is again wrong, because the word 'me' entails some vestige of pride and ego of being of some importance, having some identity indicated by an entity identified as 'me'. On the contrary, the correct description would be to use the second person pronoun 'you', because the Atma is an image of Brahm, and the same Atma also resides in the other person whom one calls 'you' and not 'me'. To address one's own self as 'you' sounds ridiculous and absurd from worldly perspective, but that is the truthful recognition of the self; the true self is Brahm, and that Brahm is also the true identity of the other person. This is true renunciation when the aspirant seeker loses attachment with even his own self, even his own body and becomes as humble as to regard himself as of no consequence as compared to the other person. When a man does not even consider himself as his own, how can he ever regard the outside world as belonging to him! Aside of this, 'Twam' tells him that the supreme Brahm is residing in his own bosom and so he be careful in all his thoughts and emotions, in his deeds and behaviours, as the almighty Lord is closely monitoring him from up close.]

32. The supreme entity is characterized by Maya (the powers to create delusions resulting in misconceptions about the 'truth' of that supreme reality, effectively hiding its real and truthful form). On the other hand, the Jiva or the living creature is characterized by Avidya (lack of true knowledge about the reality and the truth, being veiled in and held captive by a spell of ignorance cast by Maya). When one is able to overcome these influences---of Maya and Avidya---it is then that one is able to perceive the immutable and uniform Brahman who is an embodiment of eternal and infinite Anand or happiness, bliss and peace [32].

[Note---The two primary impediments to Brahman realisation are Maya or delusions, and Avidya or ignorance. They go hand in glove, because one cannot stay without the active support of the other. If ignorance is overcome with learning and erudition, all delusions and misconceptions will automatically vanish in thin air. When the veil is lifted, the illuminated and glorious entity known as Brahman shines through just like the sun breaking through when the dark clouds are removed from the overcast sky,]

33. To hear the great saying of the Vedas¹ with firm faith, conviction and belief, is called 'Srawan' (literally, to hear), while pondering deeply into and reflection upon their meaning and import, their importance and significance is called 'Manan' (literally, to discuss, reflect, contemplate and ponder on any subject or concept). [33].

[Note---¹The great sayings of the Vedas, called the *Mahavakyas*, are the following :- (a) According to Paingalo-panishad, 3/2 of the Shukla Yajur Veda, they are---(1) that art thou; (2) thou art that; (3) you are Brahman, or you and Brahman are one; and (4) I am Brahman, or I and Brahman are one.

(b) According to Mandal Brahmino-panishad, of the Shukla Yajur Veda, they are the following---(a) 'That is me', or 'that is I' is mentioned in Brahmin 2, section 2, verse no. 5; (b) 'I am Tej or I am energy personified', 'I am Pragna or personified knowledge', 'I am one and immutable', 'I am pure and non-dual Brahman'---these are mentioned in Brahmin 2, section 4, verse no. 4; (c) 'I am the eternal and immaculate Parmatma', 'I am that essence', 'you are me', 'I am you' are mentioned in Brahmin 3, section 1, verse no. 6; (d) 'I am Brahman' appears in Brahmin 3, section 2, verse no. 1; and finally (e) 'You are me' appears in Brahmin 3, section 2, verse no. 2.

(c) According to Shukar Rahasayo-panishad, 21/1-4 of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following---(1) OM salutations! Enlightenment and knowledge is Brahman and vice versa; (2) OM salutations! I am that Brahman; (3) OM salutations! Verily, that is you; (4) OM salutations! This Atma is Brahman. Other Upanishads that highlight the fundamental tenets of the Vedas are Atmabodho-panishad and Atmo-panishad amongst others.]

34. When all doubts, ambiguities and confusions about the Maha Vakyas (the great sayings) are unequivocally set to rest as a result of hearing about their true and correct explanation, and after being thus convinced of their truth after researching their veracity so as to remove any spot of doubt and suspicion about their truthfulness, one should repeatedly, consistently and persistently fix one's attention on that irrefutable 'Truth'. This 'remembering of the immaculate and irrefutable truth constantly and consistently' is called Nidhi-Dhyan. It helps to stabilise the restless mind on one uniform and steady Truth. [34].

35. One should focus one's attention on one's objective or aim after diverting one's mind from either being too concerned about one's own self or from being too concerned about the medium used or employed to remember one's objective. [That is,

once a wise person understands what the ‘truth’ is, he should pursue it with whole hearted vigour and sincerity. In his persual of the objective of attaining the ‘truth’, he should be so engrossed and concentrated in achieving his aim that he loses awareness of even himself as well as the great difficulties and efforts that are needed to achieve the objective. This is called ‘single pointed pursuance of one’s objective, oblivious of any distractions that come in the way’. Obviously, being focused on one’s objective is a precondition for success in any endeavour, especially spiritual.]

When the mind and intellect, the thoughts and emotions, become as stable, steady, unmoving and un-flickering as a flame of a lighted oil lamp at a place where there is absolutely no wind to disturb the steadiness of the flame, then this state of (mental) existence is called Samadhi. [Samadhi is a trance-like state of existence in which the person loses awareness of the gross external world around him as well as even his own body. He behaves like a blissful man in sleep-walking mode. He is perpetually at peace with himself. He feels blessed and tranquil.] [35].

36. During this trance-like state of Samadhi, the subtle body (consisting of the mind-intellect complex) ceases to remain active, and for all practical purposes has no existence as far as the Atma or soul of the creature is concerned. The various Vrittis (inherent tendencies, habits and temperaments) influence the working of the intellect and the mind, called the subtle body, of a creature. When the subtle body becomes irrelevant, the Vrittis also become irrelevant. But when the creature wakes up from his Samadhi into the waking state of consciousness, the Atma begins its interaction with the external world through the medium of the subtle body (mind-intellect) and the gross body (the sense organs). As soon as the intellect starts functioning, the various Vrittis leap back into action once again and start their nefarious influences upon the creature’s intellect, which in turn would mould his actions [36].

[Note---Briefly, the subtle body has two components—the objective mind and the subjective intellect. The latter is ‘subjective’ because its activity is influenced by the various Vasanas and Vrittis (worldly passions and lust, desires and yearnings as well as inherent natural temperaments and inclinations of a creature) present in its causal body as a result of all the cumulative effects of past deeds and actions of the creature. These cast some or the other kind of shadow on the working of the intellect. The intellect is like the senior officer who directly comes in the contact with the boss, the Atma, on one hand, and the junior officer, the mind, on the other hand. Aside of this, the Vasanas and Vrittis act like a veil surrounding the pure Atma residing in the causal body and tamper the Atma’s interaction with the intellect. During the state of Samadhi, the Atma retreats into the cocoon of the causal body, and in higher stages of Samadhi when the person apparently appears to be awake and going about his worldly duties, in actual fact his subjective subtle body, the intellect, is defunct. Meanwhile, the objective subtle body, the mind, works like a machine receiving stimuli from the sense organs of perceptions (nose, ears, eyes, tongue and skin) and sending relevant directions to the organs of actions (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive) to act mechanically. But with the intellect defunct, the various Vrittis also remain defunct in the sense that they don’t interfere with the working of the mind. In this case of wakefulness during Samadhi, which is a deceptive form of wakefulness, a man goes about doing his work in a trance-like state. This is a state in which realised Yogis (enlightened and self realised souls) live—they live a normal life but remain oblivious to all the happenings because the intellect is shut closed. With the intellect in a dormant state, no memory of deeds done and actions taken are retained, and consequentially there is no accumulation of new Vrittis and Vasanas, no new desires, volitions and ambitions to accomplish unfulfilled deeds are generated. By and by, the residual old Vasanas and Vrittis dissipate, and with no fresh

accumulation, a stage comes when the creature is purged of all his Vasanas and Vrittis altogether. This is what is called 'doing deeds without getting involved in them'.

The innate nature and behaviour of a creature are determined by different Vasanas or Vrittis, or the worldly passions and inherent tendencies that it has. The Atma is unblemished and untainted by these notions, but is nevertheless blamed or accused of the consequences because it is the de-facto Lord or Master of creation and its faults. It cannot absolve itself of its responsibilities from these consequences. But this situation arises only when the creature thinks, though erroneously and fallaciously, that it is the 'doer' of any deed. This thought is provoked in it due to its ignorance about the immaculate nature of its pure self, which is the Atma. As soon as this wisdom sprouts in its bosom, the creature gets instant freedom from being affected by the different deluding notions simply because it treats itself as the uncorrupt and non-dual Atma, which is merely a witness and an observer of all that transpires around it in this world, instead of treating his body, which does the deeds, as his true self and getting unnecessarily involved in the deeds.

The Atma, when it lives inside the physical body, is surrounded by a veil or shroud of ignorance which is like a plastic or glass transparent sheet, wrapping it from all the sides. No matter how clear and transparent that sheet might be, but it is not the same as the option of seeing and observing the truth and reality of the world direct without the intervening medium of the sheet representing ignorance and deception. So, any hint, any tinge of colour in this surrounding sheet of plastic or glass covering will make the Atma see the outside world with that particular tinge or shade of colour that appears in the surrounding sheet. Since it has no other way to determine the truth —other than removing the surrounding plastic or glass sheet itself —the Atma begins to think that the tinged world really, indeed, has that colour; i.e. the tinge is for real. But, as we see, this colour is misleading and an incorrect interpretation of fact, because it is not actually the colour of the world but is due to the presence of a tinged intervening sheet of glass or plastic.

This is what is meant in this verse. The creature 'thinks' that it is seeing or viewing or observing this world with the eyesight of wisdom and erudition, but it is being misled by this 'tinged or corrupted' biased mental vision of the actual truth and reality by the presence of ignorance and delusion caused by Agyan, or lack of truthful knowledge. In brief, what apparently appear to be the truth and the real fact is in fact not so; it is a 'tainted, corrupted, biased and untruthful' perception and view of the real Reality and truthful Truth!]

37. In this world which seems endless as compared to the limited span of life of a creature, the latter does innumerable deeds. Each deed done by the creature or any action taken by him has its own set of consequences. But these can be avoided by means of Samadhi¹.

As a result, pureness and holiness comes to the fore during Samadhi. This purity or lack of all worldly taints and blemishes that could act as a scar on the creature's pure and uncorrupt self is tantamount to enhancement of such virtues as auspiciousness, righteousness, nobility, goodness in all spheres of conduct and thought which are collectively called 'Dharma'. That is, all those degrading and mean instincts in a person that propels him to mischief, wickedness and evil of all sorts, gradually become defunct and extinct. In its stead there rises the virtues that are good and righteous, noble and auspicious, and are a true reflection of the nature and character of the supreme and immaculate stature of the Atma which is always pure, virtuous, righteous and auspicious [37].

[Note---¹This is because during the state of *Samadhi*, the person remains mentally unaware of what his physical body is doing. His intellect and mind do not accumulate

any after effects of either good or bad deeds. As a result, the causal body does not accumulate any fresh amount of Vasanas and Vrittis as described in note to verse 36 above. Since the subjective subtle body, the intellect, remains oblivious of what the gross body is doing mechanically under the junior command of the objective subtle body, the mind, the real and truthful self of the person, his Atma, does not know, for all practical purposes, what he is doing. He has no memory of it. That is why during Samadhi, a man might be sitting in extremes of climatic conditions, may be bitten by ants or rolling on a bed of velvet, but he would have no recollection of it later on. And therefore naturally, he should be absolved of or exonerated from any result of any deed done during that state. But this provision should not be misused and misconstrued as a blanket license for recklessness and sinful behaviour done purposely and feigning ignorance when prosecuted for them, because a genuine Samadhi precludes deceit and pretences.]

38. Those who are most learned and wise in the principles of Yoga (meditation and contemplation) call this state of Samadhi a 'Dharma-Megh'. It means 'a cloud that rains Dharma'. It is a metaphor for saying that this state results in a continuous flow of bliss, peace and happiness which are natural consequences of being good and righteous. These virtues rain down upon him like a shower of Amrit which is the eternal elixir of beatitude and felicity. Samadhi is akin to the cloud, while the blessings that it provides are like the rain that gives happiness and life to the world¹. [38].

[Note---¹The *rain* brings cheers and joys to the world. Without the rains, everything would parch to death; there would be no harvests, no greenery, and no merriment of a contented and happy life. Rain is a metaphor for all the good things that nature has to offer in this world to the creature, without any distinction of caste, creed, colour and faith. It is the benevolence of the Lord at its best. Similarly, Samadhi showers the aspirant with the elixir of beatitude and felicity that drenches him, soaks him and completely drowns him in its sweep!]

39-40. When as a result of obtaining the exalted state of Samadhi, an aspirant's ensnaring net/web of all his Vasanas is destroyed or eliminated (i.e. when all his worldly passions, desires, attachments and infatuations subside), and when there is no new accumulation of deeds---either good or bad, it is then that the aspirant first realises and understands the veracity of the great sayings, called the Mahavakyas (see note no verse no. 33 above) vis-à-vis the world. When he delves deep into them, he comes face to face with (or realises and understands) the fundamental principle behind those great sayings. This essential basis is called the 'non-visible truth'. [39-40].

[Note---The ultimate Truth which is the absolutely Reality in this creation, cannot be physically seen or verified in normal terms. It can only be subtly experienced, witnessed and realised as the unequivocal and immutable 'truth'. To arrive at this 'truth', one has to take the help of certain basic tenets and maxims, much like we have certain formulas in algebra and theorems in geometry, and these are used as a basis to arrive at a particular conclusive fact, an universally applicable benchmark against which everything else can be judged. If the wrong formula is applied to a given problem, the answer would be wrong. Similarly, in the metaphysical sphere, even a slight deviation from the truth would land the spiritual seeker far wide off the mark. But to begin with, a student has to prepare himself mentally about the truth of these statements and not be skeptical from the beginning, for in such a case he would only be harming his own progress. When the student finally understands the universal application and truth of these formulas and theorems, he cannot catch hold of them and exclaim 'hey, I've got the truth in my clenched fists!' because the 'truth' is so

abstract that though it is universally applicable it cannot be actually grasped physically.]

41. [In this verse, what is renunciation or Vairagya, and what is Gyan or truthful knowledge of reality obtained in the highest state of enlightenment, are being described.]

When worldly passions and infatuations are not aroused even though objects of sensual pleasures and gratifications are present in abundance all around, then it is called the true state of renunciation. Similarly, when circumstances favouring arousal of ego and pride prevail and the person has none of these negative traits in him, then it is deemed to be a state of superior wisdom, erudition and enlightenment called Gyan [41].

42. When those Vrittis (i.e. the latent and inherent tendencies, temperaments and habits of a creature) that have been overcome, or have become dormant, do not raise their ugly hood once again, then it should be treated as a sign of 'Upriti' which means to be truly disinterested. In other words, all the Vrittis have symbolically died permanently; they have ceased to exist and have any relevance for the creature. An ascetic who has this virtue is ascribed with the honourable title of 'Stith Pragya'. That is, he is one who is firmly established in enlightenment; he is steady in his wisdom and unwavering in his self realisation. Such an enlightened ascetic, called Yati, is perpetually in a state of eternal bliss called 'Sadanand' [42].

43-44. He whose Atma or soul has become perpetually engrossed in and inseparable from Brahm, such a person becomes faultless and taintless. He remains in a state of perpetual trance and inactivity as far as the world is concerned.

When the Vrittis (see verse no 41) of a man remain focused on researching about the uniformity of Brahm and Atma (i.e. when a man diverts all his efforts and energies away from pursuing the world, and instead concentrate it on spiritual enhancement, in finding true peace inside his own self instead of in the external world that is artificial, deceitful and ensnaring), he becomes what he thinks. That is, with persistent and constant contemplation and meditation upon the non-dual concept of the Atma and Brahm, the aspirant becomes firmly convinced of its unequivocal truthfulness, and consequentially has no doubt about it in his mind. He finds nothing else except pure consciousness as a result of this research and ponderings. He becomes Brahm personified as his own Atma.

This state of blessedness and realisation of the self as pure consciousness is called 'Pragya'. When this becomes a permanent affair, then that state is called 'Jivan Mukti' which refers to being freed from the fetters of ignorance while the seeker is still alive and his Atma lives in the body, which in turn does all the necessary deeds expected of it in this world, but with total indifference and complete detachment. (See also verse no. 45-47). [43-44].

[Note—The concept of *Mukti* has been elaborately described in Chapter 18, named Shattyayani Upanishad, as a note of its verse no. 19, as well as Muktiko-panishad which is Chapter 19 of this volume.]

45. A person who has no attraction towards and attachments with the body and its sense organs (i.e. he is not bothered about his body, whether it is in comfort or is suffering in any way), who has no notion of having any pride of it (such as a healthy and robust body; a strong and handsome body; or that he can achieve difficult tasks

with it; or that he can subdue his opponents using the force of his body, etc.), and who treats everything else associated with the body with equal disdain and indifference, such a person is said to be truly 'Jivan Mukta' [45].

46. A person who sees uniformity and non-duality between the Jiva (an individual living creature) and Brahm (the supreme transcendental Being), as well as between Brahm (the universal macrocosmic Soul) and the vast creation (in which form that Soul has revealed itself)—such a person is deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta' (because he has reached the pinnacle of realisation and enlightenment which has the powers to set one free from the shackles that tie a creature to this entrapping, mundane, artificial and deluding material world; knowledge of the truth is empowerment and freedom). [46].

47. Those who remain even and unruffled, those who have profound equanimity and fortitude either when they are being praised, adored, lauded or worshipped (for their good deeds, virtues and goodness) by good people, or are being tormented and persecuted by wicked people (because they regard them as obstacles in their nefarious designs), such exalted people are deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta' because equanimity, fortitude and stability as well as steadiness of the mind are possible only when a person ceases to have any ego, arrogance and self pride, and remains indifferent to what this world says about them. It is only then that he will not feel either elated at being praised and honoured, or distressed, dismayed and annoyed at being insulted and hurt [47].

48. A person who has become knowledgeable about the essential truth of Brahm, his views about the external gross world undergoes a drastic change. He perceives it with a different angle, with a different perception. Therefore, if a person continues to perceive this world in the old fashion, if he has not changed his views about it, then surely he has not known what constitutes the fundamental basis, the irrefutable truth and the universal reality of Brahm. Verily, such a man has not turned his attention inwards; he has a propensity for getting deluded and allowing himself to be trapped by the external ensnaring and deluding world; he is averse to facing the undisputed truth; he is opposed to the truthful Brahm and favorably inclined towards the extrovert but deceitful world¹. [48].

[Note---¹Though a person may be a monk, though he might have meditated and studied the scriptures, if he continues to have his old distorted and tainted views about this world—such as the primary erroneous perception of 'duality', and of treating the artificial world as being 'real and truthful'—then surely he is hallucinating; he is cheating himself and allowing himself to be drowned in delusions and ignorance. Worse, he is cheating others, because as a monk, people look up to him as a role model to emulate and seek his advice on spiritual matters. What is the purpose then of studying the scriptures if such basic things are not understood by a man!]

49. As long as a person has the notion of having comfort, pleasure, happiness and joy, it should be regarded as being the result of his past deeds, because no rewards ever accrue if there are no actions taken or deeds done. [The very fact that a man feels a sense of happiness and joy, gets comfort from any material thing in this world, and feels that a given set of circumstances or situations provide him relief from his sufferings, it shows that the effects of his past good deeds or actions still persist to give him their rewards; otherwise he would not have had the opportunity to think that there is any situation which could have been unhappy and uncomfortable and worse

for him. If he is truly self-realised and equitable, if he indeed treats all things and circumstances alike, and if he is a believer of non-duality of existence, then all circumstances and every situation would be the same for him. Besides this point, there is another reason why the very notion of having comfort and happiness presumes the lingering effects of past deeds. It is the gross body that had done the deeds and it is it that now enjoys or suffers from any results of those deeds. The body receives impulses from the world, and it is the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect that translates these impulses into a sense of enjoyment or suffering. The Atma, the pure conscious self of the creature, is a totally distinct entity that remains neutral and has nothing to do with the entire process. Neither does it get involved in doing deeds, nor does it enjoy or suffer from their consequences. Therefore, the very fact that such notions have their existence establishes that the deeds still continue to haunt the creature.] [49].

50. Even as the actions taken or deeds done while a man is dreaming become defunct and irrelevant when he wakes up from his dream, all the actions taken or deeds done by him with his gross body over thousands of years (literally), are got rid off or washed off once he wakes up to the truth of the great saying—‘I am Brahm’ [50].

[Note—As long as a person thinks that his body is his true self, he is like a man in dream who does so many deeds with his body while dreaming, but when he wakes up he finds that actually he has not been doing anything at all, and what he thought he was doing in his sleep was only a nightmare, a virtual hallucination. Deeds done in dreams are deeds done in a virtual world, a world that is imaginary and not real. The realisation that a person’s true identity is Brahm (i.e. his truthful identity is not the body but the Atma, and that the latter is the microcosmic form of the macrocosmic universal Soul of the creation called Brahm who is all pervading, almighty and omniscient, is the only truth, and that everything else besides that truth is the creation of Maya (delusions, ignorance and imaginations of the mind), is akin to waking up from the stupor of sleep. It is like coming to terms with the truth that what he was thinking to be his ‘self’ till now was a wrong proposition. This inspires him to wake up to the fact of the real truth about his self—that his true ‘self’ or his ‘true identity’ is none else but Brahm; this is a symbolic waking up from sleep. When a man is dreaming in his sleep, he remains absolutely absorbed in that imaginary and virtual world of his dreams; he remains totally oblivious and ignorant of the reality of the situation that what his sub-conscious mind thinks to be true in those dreaming moments is actually a sham, a farce, a mirage created by the sub-conscious. This fact he realises as soon as he wakes up from the sleep, but not during the course of the dream.

Likewise, when a person realises the universal and irrefutable truth of the statement—‘I am Brahm’, he wakes up to the fact that all that he had been doing earlier was not truly done by him, for those deeds were actually done by the gross perishable body, while he is the pure conscious Atma which is synonymous with Brahm, and which is most subtle, sublime and divine; it is imperishable and incorruptible unlike the body. The immaculate Atma does not get involved in any worldly deeds, and consequentially is not affected by their consequences, either good or bad. The Atma, like the supreme Brahm, is indifferent to all things that are illusionary and false, all things that are gross and perishable like this imaginary and tainted world of artificiality and delusions.]

51. A realised ascetic regards himself to be unattached with/to anything or anybody in this world, and remains indifferent and dispassionate towards them like the sky¹. As a result of this detachment, the self realised and enlightened Yati (ascetic) does not get involved at all in any future deeds. And therefore, there would be no cause for

accumulation of any results or consequences of those deeds². (See verse no. 53 in this context) [51].

[Note---¹The *Akash* or sky or space is the subtlest element of the five elements of creation that remains untarnished and pure inspite of harbouring all other elements and their endless permutations and combinations that has resulted in the formation of this complex creation. The entire universe is present in the 'space of the sky'; this space or sky is fathomless and measureless. It is present everywhere but remains untouched by the characteristics of the things present in it. The night and the day, the planets and the stars, the clouds and haze, the birds and asteroids, the immense variety of colours seen in the sky—none of them actually affect the basic pureness and texture of the sky. The sun rises and sets to create day and night, but the sky is the same. The planets and the stars are born and they die, but the sky is unbothered. Whether there is dust or cloud, whether their presence lends a colourful hue or their absence makes the sky crystal clear, the sky doesn't pay any heed. Similarly, the space inside and outside a vessel or body is one, and as soon as the demarcation is removed, both the skies become indistinguishably one. This is what is meant in this verse. The true ascetic is not bothered about his surroundings; he might have to come in contact with so many types of things and people, but none of them have any affect on him much like the stars, the planets, the cloud, the dust and the birds not affecting the integral nature of the sky. He is always dispassionate, detached, disinterested and indifferent; he is unruffled, unmoved, steady and constant. He remains as crystal clear and pure as the sky.

²A man cannot be punished for a deed in which he has no part to play or which was not done at his behest. When an ascetic becomes enlightened and self realised, he begins to treat his Atma as his 'self' instead of his body, the latter being only a vehicle to carry the Atma in its journey through this world. He continues to do whatever is righteously expected of him and necessary for completing this journey, but does not allow himself to be emotionally, sentimentally and intellectually involved in it. Hence, he remains spiritually exonerated, as it were, for the deeds done by the body; his Atma is absolved of all consequences; it is not held liable for any of the deeds done by the body. Further, since he has overcome such traits as having desires and hopes, nothing remains unfulfilled for which he would have to strive further. In due course of time, there is an all-encompassing serenity, calmness, peace and tranquility like the surface of a placid lake high up on the mountains.]

52. Even as the Akash or the subtle space present inside the minute pores of a pitcher containing wine is not at all permanently affected by the wine's smell (because when the wine is poured out and the vessel washed clean, the smell also vanishes), this Atma too does not get permanently or irreversibly tainted or smeared or polluted or in any way affected by any of the good or bad qualities of the gross body in which it lives [52].

[Note—The body is compared here to the earthen pot in which the wine is kept, the various faults and negative traits of the body to the repulsive smell of rotten wine, and the Atma to the vacant space present in the pot's pores and the whole of its inside when the wine is poured out from it. The wine vessel does smell, but it is because of the wine and the earth element of the pot as smell is dependent on the earth element in creation. This is proved by the fact that if we go a little higher in the air above a garden full of fragrant flowers, we can't smell their fragrance after some distance above the ground. In far reaches of the sky there is no notion of smell. Actually it is the earth element in the pot that smells, and not the space representing the sky element inside it. Once the vessel is broken, the smell vanishes; it would and should have been there if the 'space of the pot' was in any way affected by the smell of the wine because though the vessel is broken, the space is eternally present there, albeit without the physical structure of the body of the vessel, and the space (sky) would

continue to smell even after the vessel is broken. Similarly, the Atma remains un-flummoxed, un-related and un-concerned with any of characteristics and qualities associated with the body. (See also verse no. 6, 7, 9, 45 and 57 in this context.)

The sky has the opposite types of characteristics present in it. This is the great paradox. For example, the space of the vast cosmos has no form but the space inside a bottle or a pot takes the shape of the bottle or the pot respectively. Similarly, the vast sky in its basic and truthful form is spotless and without any colours, but it appears to be spotted with so many stars and specs of fluffy clouds and smoke of different colours as well as with birds and insects of different species, forms, colours and genres flying here and there. The colour of the sky during the evening or morning hours present a canvas of so many colours which appear to be real, but they are obviously a reflection of the colours of the light of the sun as reflected from and refracted by the various invisible impurities present in the otherwise spotless sky. This is what is meant here —though the Atma or Brahma are inherently and basically pristine pure and clean, but when they come in contact with this world, they are veiled by Maya, and therefore the different flaws and taints of the latter cast their shadow and make these two immaculate and irreproachable entities appear to have some or the other kind of spots in them.]

53. Even as an arrow shot skillfully at a target pierces through it and neutralizes it, the rising of the light of Gyan (truthful knowledge of reality behind the façade of illusions; truthful erudition, wisdom and enlightenment) is able to pierce through the darkness of ignorance and delusions. But it must be remembered that whatever was done prior to the vanquishing of ignorance and delusions by the arrow of knowledge had already produced certain effects, certain consequences, and the latter are not so easily destroyed by subsequent dawn of the light of knowledge and enlightenment. The knowledge of the Truth and being enlightened about it will help to stop any further cause of deeds and accumulation of the results of those deeds by removing their very basis—which is ignorance of the Truth and the Reality. However, those rewards or punishments (consequences) that had already accrued as the result of past deeds done prior to the realisation and acquisition of Gyan and its resultant vanquishing of Agyan or ignorance along with its attendant delusions and faults would have to be suffered; they cannot be simply wished away [53].

[Note—Please refer to verse no. 37-51, 54 and 56-60 in this context. Verse no. 51 and 54 are especially explicit in this context—verse 51 clearly states that when a Yogi (ascetic) becomes as detached from everything as the sky or space which is present everywhere, surrounds everything, but still remains separate and distinct from them, it is then that he is deemed not to be involved in generation of any fresh deeds. Therefore, there will be no question of him being responsible for the consequences of those deeds.

Now, the present verse no. 53 builds upon the idea to say that this perception of detachment comes only with Gyan or truthful wisdom and erudition, correct knowledge of the truth and reality. So in essence, both these three verses—51, 53 and 54 compliment each other.]

54. If an arrow is shot at a prey, thinking, though mistakenly, that it is a tiger, while in reality it is a cow, then the arrow cannot be stopped midway from doing an unintended harm or from killing the holy cow which is an unpardonable and a horrendous sin. Similarly, inspite of the sprouting of Gyan (truthful knowledge of reality; rising of wisdom, erudition and realisation)—which acts like this arrow—in the inner self of an aspirant, he will still have to bear with the fruits (i.e. rewards and punishments) of his past deeds. That is, he cannot expect that Gyan can absolve him

and free him from the effects of deeds done by him before he had realised what is true and what is false¹ [54].

[Note---¹Even though the arrow was shot in good faith and intentions to kill a dangerous animal like the tiger, but the fact remains that a humble cow was killed, and this killing is an unpardonable sin. Hence, if one claims that he be forgiven for killing a cow unintentionally, it is not possible and he would have to suffer the punishment of that killing, though he would be cleaned of the sin faster and entitled to all the benefits of true atonement as compared to the case when the cow was killed intentionally and purposely.]

Similarly, even when truthful Gyan arises in the individual, and if this Gyan is superficial, if it has not seeped deep down into his conscious, then mere acquaintance with knowledge pertaining to spiritualism, metaphysics and the ultimate Truth, or its awareness and even its expertise for selfish goals, will never exonerate the aspirant from having to bear the results of all that he does.

On the contrary, when 'true' and 'deep' Gyan emerges, then there would be no need for him to ask for being forgiven for his deeds and actions as well as their consequences. For in this instance, even if he has to suffer because of his deeds and actions done by his gross body, he would have realised that his 'pure and true self', the consciousness that resides in the body and which is his actual identity, will always remain exonerated and untouched by these sufferings simply because his Atma was not involved in any of the deeds and the sufferings are undergone by the body, as the Atma is eternally blissful and happy. This is only possible with sincere and truthful enlightenment and self realisation. If a person says that he is suffering because of his deeds, then surely he has not understood the meaning of his 'true self, the Atma' which is pure and blissful. This is because it is the body that suffers the consequences of past deeds, and since the wise man has understood that the body is not 'he', he remains stoic and calm and watches the sufferance like a neutral observer.

Another way of saying this is that when he stays in a perpetual state of Samadhi of self realisation, nothing external would disturb him. He would then indeed become 'Jivan Mukta' as described previously. See also verse no. 35-47, 49-51, 53 and 57-58 in this context.]

55. 'I do not decay as I am imperishable and eternal'. A wise and enlightened person who becomes aware of this fact, who has firm belief, faith and conviction in it, who adores this universality of this truth, such a person becomes firmly rooted in his immaculate and irreproachable Atma. [That is, he recognises the irrefutable fact that his true self is his pure conscious Atma and not his gross body, simply because these two criteria—no decay and eternity—are not applicable to the body.]

Say then, how can he ever imagine of having done any deeds done in the past life and their accumulative consequences. [This is because the word 'eternal' precludes the assumption of a presence of past and future lives. As eternal life does not end, so the question of any past life in which a particular set of deeds were done and a future life when their results would bear fruit does not arise. Aside of this, this enlightened man distances himself from the gross body which is perishable and subject to suffering, and which had done the deed in the first place and which would therefore have to bear its results. Again, since the 'true self' is the Atma and not the body, there is no question of an innocent Atma being punished for the deeds of the body. See verse no. 56-60 also.] [55]

56. The deeds and their fruits fructify only when one thinks that the body belongs to him, or that it is 'his' body; or when he begins to identify himself with the body. But,

it is not desirable to treat the gross and perishable body as belonging to one's self; or even that the body is the representative of the self.

Hence, one should wisely discard the erroneous notion of the body being one's true identity; or even that the body belongs to one's own self. This wisdom will automatically erase all causes for getting perturbed by deeds and their consequences, good or bad (because, as explained in verse no. 55 above, it is the body that does the deeds and not the Atma). [56].

57-58. This misconception or erroneous belief that one develops or conjures up about his body (as the latter being one's true identity and as belonging to him), is the basic and primary cause of all imaginations pertaining to the past deeds and their good or bad consequences. Say, whatever that is imagined, or that is founded on a wrong premise, how can it be ever true? How can false perceptions or false allegations decide the truthfulness of anything?

That which is not true, how can ever have a 'birth' or origin, and how can anything that is not born ever decay or die or come to ruin and get destroyed? And as a natural corollary, that which is false or non-existent, how can it do or not do any deeds and take any actions? Therefore, the question of consequences and sufferings or enjoyments does not arise. [57-58].

[Note—*Truth* is everlasting; it is eternal and universal; it is not subject to any decay or destruction or change or tampering with in any way. Since the *body* decays and dies one day, it is obviously not eternal, and therefore it is not the 'truth'. Then how can it do any deed? It does not actually, because this whole world itself is an imagination of the mind; it is artificial and illusionary. When the mind shuts down, the world and the body cease to exist. To illustrate the point, when we are deeply concentrated on anything that interests us very much and our mind and intellect are busy with it, we just don't 'register' other happenings even in our close proximity, except those that directly impinge on the subject upon which we are focused at the present. Similarly, a sleeping man forgets all about his bodily agonies or physical worries pertaining to the external world while he is soundly asleep. That is why doctors prescribe sleeping pills for patients who are gravely sick. How can a sleeping man do anything? This same analogy applies here. How can a man who has withdrawn himself from the external world and is focused internally ever be blamed for doing a deed about which he is totally unaware of. Another good example would be a man 'sleep walking'. It is established that such a man can do incredulous tasks in this state which he would shudder to even think of doing under normal circumstance; he even solves highly complicated questions which he couldn't do while awake, or he would even commit some grave deed without being aware of what he is doing. When he wakes up the next day, he is astonished at what he is credited with or accused of doing. Say, is it justified to punish such a man for any wrong doing, or rewarded for any success in this circumstance? Obviously not, but for all practical purposes he is regarded as the one who has done that deed or taken that action!]

59. If Agyan (lack of correct knowledge and ignorance about the reality of this body and the world) is completely eliminated, and its place is taken over by Gyan (truthful knowledge of the factual position), say how can then the body be said to have an existence? Doubting the falsehood of the body and the deceptive, illusionary nature of the world with which the body interacts is possible only with people with a low level of intellect and wisdom¹. [59].

[Note--¹It is like a hallucinating mind which sees water in a parched desert which is actually due to the effect of heat on sand. Although a man might know this basic natural phenomenon he still falls prey to it and runs behind it, only to die of thirst. So

we see the effect of Maya in practical terms. If a man does not allow his discriminatory intellect to decide what is true and what is false by relying upon the preaching of the scriptures as well as of the wise sages and seers, and instead allows all sorts of absurd and confusing ideas and precepts to cloud his mind and give rise to doubts and perplexities of all kinds, then that man has the same fate as the man who sees an oasis in a desert due to the effects of mirage. No one else is to blame for his misfortunes; it is himself who is responsible.]

60. When the scriptures talk about ‘Prarabdh’ which refers to the deeds done in the past and their consequences that are to be suffered in the present, they intend to teach the truth to those who are ignorant about the reality and who are extroverts¹ [60].

[Note---¹The scriptures teach them that the sorrows, sufferings and pains which afflict them in this life are the results of the deeds done by them in the past. So they must be aware that whatever they are doing in this life would have to be borne by them themselves and no body else. This serves two purposes:—First, since the person is already agonised and suffering, he will shun from doing unrighteous things now in present in order to avoid suffering later on as a repeat of his present predicament; this fear instills in him a desire to do good things and avoid sinful deeds. The second purpose is this—if he is an intelligent and wise man, he tries to find out how it is possible to avoid or limit or alleviate the sufferings caused as a result of his past deeds. It is then the teaching of this and other Upanishads come to his help. He is inspired to walk on the path of self realisation and enlightened wisdom. The person learns that his true self is not the gross and perishable body, but an eternal irreproachable entity called the Atma; that the Atma is pure and has innumerable sublime virtues, and it is unaffected by the deeds done by the body; that the world which he has been regarding hitherto as true is indeed false. Therefore, the horrendous sorrows, agonies and distresses that he thinks he is suffering from are actually suffered by the body, which is anyway a storehouse of agonies and pains. It is not ‘him’ who suffers because he is the Atma, which is blissful and eternal, divine and ethereal.

Further, it is futile to pursue this world endlessly and cause one’s self endless agitations, sufferings and bewilderments unnecessarily. He learns the concepts of renunciation, detachment, dispassion and indifference. He understands the importance of studying the scriptures with faith and concentration. He realises the usefulness of such tools as Yoga and Dhyan (meditation, contemplation), Samadhi (a perpetual state of being in Yoga and Dhyan) as means of finding liberation and deliverance, of emancipation and salvation. His present precarious condition acts as a catalyst in this direction; he becomes a devoted seeker of ‘truthful’ peace, tranquility and happiness. He realises that it is indeed possible to be blissful even while living a normal life in this world. He overcomes the impulses of the mind, which in any case is the epicenter of all his imaginary problems.]

61-64. [These four verses enumerate the salient characteristics of the non-dual Brahm, the ultimate Authority in creation.]

It (i.e. Brahm) is indeed complete and wholesome; it is without a beginning and an end; it is boundless, limitless, infinite, measureless, fathomless and without any parameters; it is without any blemish, fault, errors, shortcomings and pollutions of any kind; it is a treasury and a fount of all that is true, holy, auspicious, noble, virtuous and good; it is pure consciousness; it is eternal, perpetual and everlasting; it is an abode or a treasury of beatitude and felicity, of happiness and joy; it is imperishable, endless and infinite as well as is free from degradation, demotion and degeneration [61].

It is self evident and does not require any proof of its existence, it is verifiable and witnessed all around; it is uniform, universal, immutable and unchangeable; it is indeed all-inclusive, complete and wholesome; it is without an end or an expiry; it is all-encompassing, multifaceted and multifarious in its scope, reach and ramifications as it represents all that is present in this creation; it can neither be abandoned nor accepted as it is an integral and unavoidable constituent part of everything and without it nothing exists; it does not require any support or rest for itself, and neither is it based or founded upon anything else [62].

It is without attributes and definable characteristics; it does not get involved in mundane activities and deeds, i.e. it remains a neutral witness to all that's happening around in this artificial world; it is most minute, most subtle and most atomic; it has no alternatives, no replacements, no parallels and no options for its self; it is invisible and imperceptible as well as faultless, holy, divine and pure; it cannot be described and explained by words in any form and in any way; it is beyond the purview and reach of the mind and speech, i.e. they cannot fathom it, comprehend it and describe it [63].

It is competent in and possessed of all good, auspicious, righteous and noble virtues, glories and majesties; it is self-proved and self-evident, i.e. it does not require any certificate for itself and any authentication of its truth, supremacy and primacy; it is pure, immaculate, irreproachable, pristine and uncorrupt; it is enlightened, wise, erudite and realised; it cannot be compared with or to any other entity; it is unilateral, one and non-dual.

Verily, this stupendous, magnificent, glorious, eclectic and matchless supreme entity with these astounding and majestic virtues is none other than the transcendental authority called Brahm [64]. (61—64)

65. In this way, one should become enlightened about the indivisible, immutable, eternal and infinite nature of the Atma by the virtue of one's own intellectual understanding, as well as one's own experience and verification of the veracity of the truth about the virtues of the glorious Atma and the reality of its exalted and dignified existence. This realisation makes a person spiritually enlightened, accomplished and well versed in this sublime and subtle, divine and transcendental, ethereal and eclectic knowledge of the Atma which is the pure consciousness and the 'self'. Consequentially, having overcome all doubts and confusions, and having been convinced of the non-dual and unique stature of the Atma which has no alternatives, no match and no parallel, which is absolutely pristine pure and uncorrupt, one should become finally and firmly rooted and established in this great truth. He should, as a result of this realisation, become calm, tranquil, peaceful and happy for ever'. [65]

66. [Until verse no. 65, the wise and learned teacher has been preaching his disciple about the essential, subtle and sublime characteristic features of the eclectic, magnificent, unique, fantastic and majestic quintessential entity called the Atma. This knowledge removes all delusions, ignorance, misconceptions and hallucinations from the mind of the disciple. This robust enlightening knowledge literally broke through the darkness that had been shrouding his wisdom just like the rays of a bright sun rising in the horizon in the morning pierces through the deep and dense veil of darkness that had covered the world during the night. And even as ghosts and phantoms of the night, fostered and sustained by darkness, vanish in the presence of the rays of the brilliant sun, so do all the misconceptions and delusions that had been swamping the intellect of the disciple till now and literally drowning him in a bog of

ignorance vanish too. He exclaims with joy of realisation and new found wisdom which is like the lotus opening its petals when the rays of the morning sun falls on it, 'Hey presto! Eureka! I've discovered the Truth! It's a profound revelation for me; I'm astonished that I'd remained oblivious of it till now! I can see the light finally.'

'The world that I had been seeing till now, say, where has it gone now so suddenly? Who has removed it? Where has it vanished? It's a subject of great astonishment for me that the world that I had been seeing all throughout my life and even till a few moments ago, is it not there any more?' [66].

[Note—This exclamatory wonderment of the stunned disciple who appears to be shocked at this sudden change of perception as soon as the gravity of the teacher's preaching sank in his intellect and mind, reminds one of a man seeing a mirage in a desert or a man who has just seen a ghost in his front, or for that matter a beautiful and a lively scene before his own eyes before it suddenly vanishes. This single verse summarises the ecstatic emotions of an enlightened man when realisation of the unequivocal 'self truth' suddenly dawns upon the horizon of his intellect-mind complex. His eyes literally pop out in wonderment, and he is amazed and astounded at this new view which was always there but not visible to him. All along his mind was programmed to treat this world as the real thing, and he had been dealing with it in the belief that he is dealing with a real thing. When he suddenly realises the falsehood of all this, it shakes him through and through. Now he has suddenly woken up to the fact that he had been literally 'dreaming' till now, that he had been taken for a ride, as it were.]

67. In the vast, endless and fathomless ocean called Brahm, which is brimming over with the ambrosia/nectar of eternal beatitude and felicity, what is there for me to abandon, or for that matter even accept anything, for there is nothing but Brahm all around me and I am completely soaked and drenched in it? Say, is there anything except it, i.e. except the overwhelming Brahm which is the ocean of bliss and happiness that surrounds me? Say, how marvelous it is; how fantastic it is; how magnificent it is; how wonderful it is! [67].

[Note—This verse indicates the high level of spiritual exultation and the ecstatic state of existence of a truly Brahm-realised person. He feels submerged in the supreme bliss that comes with Brahm realisation, and his eclectic and unique condition of having attained supreme beatitude and felicity can be compared with that of a man who submerges himself in a bath tub full of nectar, as it were. He would want nothing more; he would just not want to get out of it.]

68. I do not see anything at all here (in the gross, perishable external world); I do not hear or know anything either. This is because I am steadily engrossed and perpetually submerged and drowned in this ocean of eternal bliss that self realisation and enlightenment has provided me with. I have no other attributes except those that are possessed by my 'true self'. (And these attributes have been listed by the wise teacher from verse nos.1 till 65 above.) [68].

69. I have no company and encumbrances of any kind; I have no physical and gross body or organs; I have no external identification marks; I am the Supreme Being, Lord Hari, personified. I am placid, calm and unruffled; I am eternal, imperishable and infinite; I am complete, immutable, indivisible and wholesome; I am contented and fulfilled; and I am the most ancient and primary entity in this creation [69].

70. I am not the doer of any worldly deeds, I am therefore not the one who suffers or enjoys its consequences in the form of punishments and rewards. I am without any

negative traits such as having any trace of worldly faults, taints, blemishes and shortcomings of all kinds; I am imperishable, infinite, without a beginning or an end; I am an embodiment of purity and realisation; I am nothing else but the eternal Shiva personified (i.e. I am auspicious, righteous, holy, divine, beautiful, virtuous, pious, truthful, wise and enlightened like Lord Shiva).[70].

71. This eternal, universal, auspicious and enlightening knowledge was given to the teacher by the eternal Lord Shiva himself. The teacher imparted this knowledge to a Brahmin disciple of his named Apantratam. The latter taught it to Brahma, the creator, who divulged it to sage Ghor Angiras. The latter preached it to Raikwa, who in turn passed it on to Ram (i.e. to sage Parashuram who is also known by this name). He (Parashuram) revealed it for the welfare and well being of the entire mankind at large. These doctrines, as expounded in this Upanishad, show the path of spiritual liberation and deliverance, of emancipation and salvation to a creature who is honest about it. This is the assertion of the Vedas. This is their proclamation and edict. Verily, this is the sacrosanct and profound tenet of this Upanishad. Amen! [71].

---Shanti Paath---

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CHAPTER—16

TARSAR UPANISHAD

The ‘Tarsar Upanishad’ (pronounced “Taar-Saar Upanishad”) is also known as the ‘Tarak Upanishad’ (pronounced “Taarak Upanishad”). As the name suggests, it is called ‘Tarsar’ (or “Tarak”) because it shows the spiritual seeker the basic path which can provide him with liberation and deliverance from the horrors of this world full of sorrows and misfortunes by breaking free from the cycle of birth and death, leading to his emancipation and salvation. The word ‘Tarak’ means to cause or enable to pass or cross over, to carry over; one that rescues, provides relief and succour, one that can provide liberation and deliverance to the creature from any bondage, and ‘Saar’ refers to the basics, the essentials of how this can be done.

This is a short Upanishad containing only three cantos which highlight the following—(a) the importance and significance of the holy pilgrimage site called ‘Avimukta’ where Lord Shiva pronounces the salvation providing divine words in the ears of a dying man (canto 1); (b) the various connotations and manifestations, importance and significance of the divine, sublime and ethereal word ‘OM’ (canto 2); and (c) the Mantras that empower and entitle a man to attain the exalted abode of Lord Vishnu (canto 3). This Upanishad is very similar to Jabalo-panishad (chapter no. 3 of this anthology) which also deals with the same topic of the holy site of ‘Avimukta’.

The last canto is very significant for devotees of Lord Vishnu because it gives them a key to fulfillment of their desires to attain ‘Mukti’ or deliverance of their souls. It also highlights the fact that the only incarnation of Vishnu that is complete and wholesome is that of Sri Ram. This view is identical to another great Upanishad on this subject—the Ramottar-taponishad; an English version of it has been published

separately by this humble author under the title ‘an anthology of Sri Ram’s Upanishads’. This particular Upanishad belongs to the Atharva Veda tradition.

Another identically named Upanishad is the Advai Tarak Upanishad which is chapter no. 11 of this volume. This Upanishad lays stress on the meditative technique for realising Brahm through the path of meditation or Yogs as propounded by sage Patanjali. The underlying stress in both these Upanishads is attaining liberation and deliverance of the soul from the world of sufferings and sorrows. They both complement each other.

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-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath

Canto--1

1. Hari OM salutations! Lord Brihaspati (the moral preceptor of the Gods and represented in astrology and Vedic astronomy by the planet Jupiter) once said to sage Yagyavalkya, ‘The place called Kurushetra is the holy site where the Gods perform their fire-sacrifice. It also represents the place which should be treated as the abode of the supreme Lord called Brahm by all the creatures. As such, it is worthy to be honoured and revered by all, wherever they live. It is the place that has the potential to provide emancipation and salvation to all the creatures. Hence, for practical spiritual purposes, the temporal (worldly) location of such a holy and divine site that has the combined benefits of a holy site where Gods perform their sacrifices, where Brahm resides, and where liberation and deliverance from this entrapping world is available for an ordinary mortal creature, is called the ‘Abhimukta-Kshetra’. Here Lord Rudra (Shiva) preaches a dying man about the ‘Tarak Mantra’ of the supreme Brahm as the result of which the man attains eternity and finds emancipation and salvation for his Atma (soul). That is why those desirous of ‘Moksha’(final emancipation and salvation) should seek shelter of this holy site called ‘Avimukta’. It should therefore not be discarded or abandoned or discounted by such seekers and aspirants at any cost’. This is what sage Yagyavalkya was taught (advised) by Lord Brihaspati.[1]

[Note—(1) The word *Avimukta* literally means ‘that which is not free; that which is bound or shackled’. Here the word means that place or that entity that has the potential to set free those who are shackled by providing them liberation and deliverance from their bondage.

This is the place where all those whose Atma (soul) are shackled come searching to find a way to break free from their worldly bondage. It is like a spiritual reformatory where people needing reformation are allowed to live. All of them desire salvation and emancipation, all are shackled and tormented by the world and its endless agonies, all have sinned in one way or the other. The Avimukta Kshetra has the necessary wherewithal to provide the spiritual seeker with liberation and deliverance, such as the eternal presence of Lord Shiva, the most wise God who constantly preaches the dying man about the great Mantra for salvation, but the person seeking such freedom has to have the will and the motivation himself, just like the case where a reformation prison can help only those who wish to repent and relent on their past misdeeds, but it cannot improve stubborn characters. Mere presence in such a place would not be of much value if there is no sincere desire and will on the part of the creature to seek emancipation and salvation for his soul. The environment is conducive for such enlightenment because he hears the tale of woes of many others like him who have suffered immensely for their misdeeds, thereby igniting a sense of

detachment for and repugnance towards this world in the creature. He realises that this world is full of sorrows and pains, and therefore he should endeavour not to do anything that would force his soul to revert to this horror once again. But at the same time if he is not vigilant and self-thinking, this same Avimukta Kshetra can prove to be counter-productive because he would learn dirtier tricks from other inmates of this spiritual prison.

It has many connotations such as—(a) The holy pilgrimage site of Kashi or Varanasi, a city of northern India where Lord Shiva is said to reside eternally on this earth and provide this liberation and deliverance to the soul of a dying man by uttering the Tarak Mantra in his ears. (b) Another site is Kurushetra where the legendary Mahabharat war was fought. (c) According to Yoga philosophy, this site is located at two places corresponding to the holy sites mentioned above---one is the area around the ears, and the other is central point between the two eyebrows. (d) The Brahm-randhra which is the top central point of the head is also said to be the abode of Brahm. It is the Avimukta area because when the ascetic is able to concentrate his attention on this citadel, he achieves supreme bliss and peace. According to Yoga, when the vital energy of Kundalini is aroused, it snakes up the spine and enters this area, thereby immense bliss to the aspirant.

(2) The *Tarak Mantra* preached by Lord Shiva is that group of esoteric, ethereal and holy words, syllables or phrases that have stupendous magical and divine powers that can achieve miracles, and one of them is the ability to give liberation and deliverance to even sinful creatures who can never expect to find emancipation themselves. It gives freedom from miseries, fears, torments and other misfortunes that devour a creature. It liberates a creature from the cycle of birth and death, the miseries and fears associated with this world, with old age, death and their accompanying horrors etc. (Atharva-shikhar Upanishad,2/1; Advai-tarak Upanishad, 3; and Jabal Upanishad, canto 1). The ascetic/Yogi achieves liberation and deliverance by concentrating his internal thoughts at a point between the eyebrows where he realises the supreme, transcendental existence of Brahm, and he mentally becomes one with Brahm after this realisation (Advai-tarak- 2,3). According to RamTapaniupanishad, the divine emancipation and salvation providing Mantra is 'OM RANG RAMAYE NAMAHE'. (RamTapaniupanishad,2/3). Atharva-shikhar Upanishad, 4/4 says that 'OM' is that Tarak Mantra]

2. Next, sage Bharadwaj asked sage Yagyavalkya, 'What is that Tarak Mantra?' Yagyavalkya replied, 'The Tarak Mantra is the following—'OM NAMOHA NARAYANAYA'. [This Manta briefly means 'OM salutations! I bow and pay my obeisance to the supreme Lord Narayan.] It refers to the supreme, eternal, omniscient, enlightened and transcendental consciousness known as the Atma (or Brahm). It is that divine entity that should be worshipped, adored, revered and honoured. [In other words, when one worships Narayan, he is deemed to be worshipping the supreme Brahm who has revealed himself as the pure conscious Atma of the individual creature at the micro level of creation, and as the Viraat Purush called Narayan (or Vishnu) at the macro level.]

[Now the sage explains the meaning of the three words of the Mantra--] The first word 'OM' represents the imperishable, immutable and eternal Atma. The second word 'NAMOHA' represents 'Prakriti' or Mother Nature. The third word 'NARAYANA' stands for the macrocosmic manifestation of the un-manifested transcendental Brahm. Anyone who understands this sublime and mystical fact is able to attain or acquire the essence of 'Amrit', which is the ambrosia of eternity, bliss and blessedness. This eclectic knowledge is the supreme form of knowledge.

[The entire Mantra has eight letters. Now the sage explains their significance in another way--] 'OM' represents the supreme Brahm. The 2nd letter 'Na' stands for

Vishnu, the sustainer of creation. The 3rd letter 'Ma' represents Rudra or Lord Shiva, the concluder of creation. [These two letters combine to form the second word 'Namo']. The 4th letter 'Na' symbolises 'Ishwar', the macrocosmic causal body of creation. The 5th letter 'Ra' stands for 'Viraat', the macrocosmic gross body of creation. The 6th letter 'Ya' represents 'Purush', the macrocosmic Male aspect of creation. The 7th letter 'Ana' stands for 'Bhagwan', the great Lord. And the last letter, the 8th, is 'Ya' and it symbolises 'Parmatma', the supreme, transcendental Atma or Soul. [The 4th till the 8th letters form the third word 'NA-RA-YA-NA-YA' of the holy, sublime, ethereal and mystical 'Tarak Mantra'.] In this way, those who become enlightened about the sublime, subtle and esoteric meaning of this Tarak Mantra become great persons (honourable souls) who transcend the humdrum and become exalted, erudite, wise and superior to their fellow men. [2]

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Canto---2

1. The word (or the symbol of) OM is an image of the supreme, transcendental Brahm. It is the word (OM) that is to be worshipped, revered and honoured with this understanding. It consists of eight letters in their root form. These eight root words are the following—'A' is the first letter; 'Oo' is the second; 'Ma' is the third; the 'dot' is the fourth syllable; the 'Naad' is the fifth aspect; 'Kalaa' is the sixth aspect; 'Kalaa Teet' is the seventh; and 'Param' is the eighth aspect or facet of OM. Since the word OM has the potential to provide liberation and deliverance to the creature's soul, it is called 'Tarak'. One should recognise this word as having this potential, and worship it as such [1].

2-4. There is a famous hymn in this connection. It states that the letter 'A' manifests as Brahma known as 'Jamvaan', the letter 'Oo' creates the God known as 'Hari', the letter 'Ma' manifests itself as 'Lord Shiva' who in turn manifests himself as 'Hanuman', the 'Bindu' (dot) reveals itself as 'Shatrughan' who is a manifestation of discuss held by Lord Vishnu (2); the 'Naad' (the cosmic background divine and ethereal sound, usually regarded as a 'cosmic music') manifests itself as 'Bharat' who is a revelation of Vishnu's conch, the stupendous powers and vitality, the strength and potentials that the male aspect of creation possesses, symbolised by the so-called sixteen 'Kalaas' of a man, is revealed in the form of 'Laxman' who is a manifestation of legendary hooded serpent (called Sesh-Nath) who holds the earth on its hoods, and is therefore called 'Dharni-dhar') (3); the 'Kalaa-Teet' aspect (of the Tarak Mantra), or that powerful aspect of the supreme Brahm that transcends all known definitions and parameters, is known as 'Sita'.

Beyond all these is the entity that transcends all the above, or that which encompasses all of them, includes them in its ambit and even surpasses them infinitely. Verily, it is the supreme Soul of the creation called Parmatma; it is also known as 'Ram'. He is the most exalted and the best male ever created in creation; he is a manifestation of the supreme, macrocosmic Male aspect of creation called Purushottam (which literally means 'the best, most exalted male'). [Lord Ram is a revelation of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and nourisher of the entire creation.] (4) [2-4]

[Note—Refer also to Canto 3, verse nos. 1-8 of this present Tarsar Upanishad, as well as to Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-5.]

5. Hence, those who are wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened regard the word OM and its constituent letters (A,U,M), the syllables (dot) as well as the various other aspects (such as Naad, Kalaa etc.) as the all-encompassing and all-pervading supreme entity, and worship and revere it as such. OM is the complete, supreme, imperishable entity worthy of adoration, honour and worship. All that exists—whether in the past, at present or in the future—in so many myriad forms, such as the various essential elements of creation, the Mantras, the Varnas (classes in society), the Gods, the Chandas (poetical composition styles used in scriptures), the Rik (sacred hymns of the Rig Veda), the Kalaa (art, craft, skill, expertise, facet of anything), the Shakti (powers, potentials, strength, energy, stamina etc.) and Sristi (creation, animate as well as inanimate)—all of them are nothing else but the various manifestations or revelations of the same essential principle called OM. One must be fully aware and be enlightened about this matter [5].

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Canto 3

[This Canto is an extension of the previous Canto 2 and has a striking resemblance to the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-5.]

1. Sage Bharadwaj asked sage Yagyavalkya, ‘Oh Lord! Which are the divine Mantras (i.e. the group of especially empowered letters or words) that can please the supreme Lord (called Parmatma) so much that he makes himself available as a revelation (i.e. gives his divine vision to his devotees)?’

Sage Yagyavalkya replied, ‘OM salutations! I bow my head most reverentially to that supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is known by the names of Narayan¹ and Bhagwan², amongst his other names. He represents the letter ‘A’ of the divine word OM which manifested itself as ‘Jambaan’ (or as Brahma, the creator of this world—see verse no. 2/2 above)³. This Lord representing the letter ‘A’ personifies or embodies the three worlds represented by the words ‘Bhu’ (meaning the terrestrial world; the earth), ‘Bhuvaha’ (meaning the sky above the earth in its atmosphere), and ‘Swaha’ (meaning the heavens) [1].

[Note---(1) ¹*Narayan* is the name assigned to the supreme Lord. Usually it refers to Vishnu, the sustainer, but from the view point of the Upanishads, it is the Viraat Purush, the all mighty, all encompassing and all pervading cosmic Supreme Being.

(2) ²The word *Bhagwan* means someone who has the following virtues :---(a) ‘Aishwarya’—or glory, grandeur, majesty, greatness, omnipotence, power, flourish, supremacy, sway etc.; (b) ‘Dharma’ —or righteousness, probity, propriety, virtuous and noble conduct and thought; (c) ‘Yash’ —or renown with a good fame and name, having glory and majesty; (d) ‘Sri’—or possessing wealth, prosperity, fortune, opulence, pomp and pageantry; (e) ‘Gyan’—or knowledge, wisdom, erudition, expertise and enlightenment etc.; (f) ‘Vairagya’—or renunciation, detachment, dispassion and non-involvement with the material world.

³The letter ‘A’ stands for the primary stage of creation when the process was initiated. It represents the beginning of creation, and that is why Brahma (the patriarch of creation) is being referred to here.]

2. OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is also known by the names of Narayan and Bhagwan who represent the letter ‘U’ of the divine and ethereal word OM. This Lord

manifested himself as Upendra (literally, the younger brother of Indra, the King of Gods; but here referring to Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant manifestation of Lord Vishnu) who is known by the name of Hari (which is one of the numerous names of Vishnu). This Lord represented by U personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha; the entire creation symbolically represented by these three words is but only a fraction of the vast and all-inclusive form of Vishnu. [2].

[Note—Lord Vaaman had measured the entire creation in his three steps in the fire sacrifice of king Bali. That is why he is referred to here as the God known as Upendra who has the entire creation under his domain. In the first step Lord Vaaman had measured the entire earth represented by the letter Bhu, the second step covered the rest of the divisions of creation known as ‘Bhuvans’ of which there are fourteen in number and which are represented here by the word Bhuvaha, while the third step measured the king’s head, or the ‘self’ in a symbolic manner, which the word Swaha stands for. The word ‘Swaha’ has ‘Swa’ as its first part, meaning ‘self’.]

3. OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is also known by the names of Narayan and Bhagwan who represent the letter ‘M’ of the divine and ethereal word OM. This Lord, represented by M, has manifested himself as Shiva, who in turn revealed himself as Hanuman (who is regarded as the greatest devotee of Sri Ram). This Lord personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha [3].

[Note—The third letter ‘M’ symbolises the conclusion of creation because when we pronounce this letter M we have to close the mouth. This closing of the mouth is indicative of end or conclusion of creation because when the man dies his mouth closes for good. Lord Shiva presides over this aspect of creation, and that is why he is depicted in a constant meditative and renunciate state as he had seen everything that was there to be seen in this world, and now has become totally disillusioned by their false charm, and has therefore decided to renounce the world altogether.

Lord Shiva had manifested himself as Hauman during the incarnation of the Supreme Being as Lord Ram in this world.]

4. OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is also known by the names of Narayan and Bhagwan who represent the ‘Bindu’ (the dot) of the symbol for the divine and ethereal word OM. This Lord represented by the ‘dot’ has manifested himself as Shatrughan (one of the three younger brothers of Sri Ram), and he personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha (see verse no. 1 above). [4].

[Note—The ‘dot’ symbolises the ‘bull’s eye’ of a target that is aimed at by a skilled archer or a sniper or a marksman. The word ‘Shatru’ in the name of Shatrughan (Shatru + Ghan) means an enemy, while ‘Ghan’ refers to the heavy hammer used by ironsmiths to flatten a piece of metal, here symbolising a person who is able to ruthlessly batter, crush and conquer all enemies. So this term applies to the Lord who is able to destroy all the enemies of the spiritual aspirant if the latter seeks the Lord’s protection. Here the term ‘enemy’ applies to the different spiritual hurdles that a man faces in his path of finding emancipation and salvation.]

5. OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is also known by the names of Narayan and Bhagwan who represent the ‘Naad’ (the all pervading and omnipresent cosmic ethereal sound), which in turn represents the divine and ethereal word OM. This Lord represented by Naad manifested himself as Bharat (one of the three younger brothers

of Sri Ram), and he personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha (see verse no. 1 above) [5].

[Note—The cosmic Naad is present uniformly everywhere and is the herald of Brahm. In other words, the glorious and magnificent virtues of the supreme Divinity known as Brahm, as well as the all-pervading presence of this Brahm, are represented by this Naad. In the present case, Bharat represents this Naad as he is a representative of Lord Ram, the supreme Brahm manifested in his holy form, in the city of Ayodhya, the capital of the kingdom in which Lord Ram revealed himself as its king. Bharat's marked exemplary devotion for the Lord, and his sense of duty, morality, ethics, righteousness, probity and propriety are legendary and were praised by the Lord himself on more than one occasion. Bharat is a symbolic herald of these glorious virtues and the presence of universal divinity represented by Lord Ram in this creation. Bharat is an image of all the glorious qualities that Lord Ram himself embodies. Bharat exemplifies the virtues one needs to inculcate in one's self as stepping stones that lead one to realisation of the supreme Brahm.]

6. OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma. This supreme Lord is also known by the names of Narayan and Bhagwan who represent the 'Kalaa' aspect of the divine and ethereal word OM. This Lord represented by Kalaa manifested himself as Laxman (one of the three younger brothers of Sri Ram), and he personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha (see verse no. 1 above) [6].

[Note—The word Kalaa represents the special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one must possess if he were to successfully reach his target in life. These different qualities and virtues present in a man symbolically make him perfect; they represent his various strengths and potentials, and they are said to be sixteen in number corresponding to and symbolised by the sixteen phases of the moon. Since a man is an exact replica of the 'Viraat Purush', who in turn is a subtle manifestation of the sublime and transcendental supreme Brahm, these sixteen qualities or attributes of a man refer to the sixteen qualities of Brahm himself that made him the Lord of creation. The presence of all these divine attributes makes a man complete and very powerful, and this fact is indicated here in the case of Laxman. Even a cursory reading of the epic Ramayana indicates that without Laxman by his side, Lord Ram would have been lost in the quagmire of grief that he faced when his wife Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana. Laxman was Ram's comrade-in-arm, his pillar of strength, his solace and succour, and his only companion in times of adversities. Hence, Laxman represents all the magnificent good qualities that are present in this creation which enable a man to overcome all adversities, hurdles and ill circumstances. Since Brahm is the creature's only sincere well wisher and succour in times of distress and dismay, and since Brahm possesses all the exemplary qualities grouped under the single word Kalaa, Laxman is regarded as being equivalent to Brahm. Or in other words, he personifies Brahm with all his dignified virtues that are needed by a man to complete and get across the cycle of birth and death without hurdles.]

7. OM salutations! I bow most reverentially before the supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma who is also known by the name Narayan and Bhagwan, who represents the 'Kala Teet' aspect or facet of the divine and ethereal word OM which manifested itself as the supreme, omnipotent Goddess Bhagwati Sita, who in turn is the manifestation of the stupendous powers and potentials of the 'mind', and who personifies or embodies the three worlds known as Bh, Bhuvaha and Swaha (see verse no. 1 above). [7].

[Note--- According to the philosophy of Vedanta, this world is a creation of the mind. When Brahm decided to initiate the process of creation, this resolve of his was in his 'mind', and to implement it his mind first created 'Maya', which literally means delusion and illusion. This Maya created this colourful canvas of the world as we know it. When Brahm revealed himself as Sri Ram, the Lord's Maya accompanied him as Sita. Hence, Sita is also known as 'Maha-maya' because she represents the greatest Maya of creation.]

8. A seeker/aspirant should treat all the six Mantras (verse no.2-7) as having the same effect and potential as the first Mantra (verse no. 1). That is, all of them are equally important. The salient points of the Mantras (1-7) are the following:--(1) Jambaan (Brahma) represents the letter 'A', (2) Hari Upendra represents the letter 'U', (3) Shiva, who has revealed himself as Hanuman, represents the letter 'M', (4) Shatrughan represents the Bindu (dot), (5) Bharat represents the cosmic Naad, (6) Laxman represents Kalaa, and (7) Sita represents the Kalaa Teet aspect or facet of OM respectively.

OM salutations! I bow my head most reverentially to the supreme Lord known, inter- alia, as Parmatma, Narayan, Bhagwan, the Param Purush (the Male aspect of creation) and the Puran Purush (the great Lord renowned in all the Purans, the mythological histories, and praised by them). He is eternal, constant and universal, is pure and uncorrupt, is enlightened, wise and omniscient, is free and unshackled, is irrefutably truthful, is supreme and transcendental, is without an end, is non-dual and the only one, and is complete in every respect. He personifies the three known worlds such as 'Bhu' (the terrestrial world), 'Bhuvaha' (the sky) and 'Swaha' (the heavens). He is the supreme Soul of the entire creation, and is therefore called Parmatma. In short, I bow to Sri Ram who is the supreme Brahm himself. [8].

9. A person who contemplates and meditates sincerely upon these eight divine Mantras becomes as pure and potent as the fire, the air, the sun and a religious site. He is known to all the Gods (i.e. they recognise and respect him). He gets the reward of having studied the great epics and ancient Purans as well as of having repeated the divine Mantras pertaining to Lord Rudra (Shiva) thousands of times. [That is, the benefits derived by understanding the implications of these esoteric Mantras are a thousand times greater than that of merely repeating them mechanically, or reading the scriptures without understanding their subtle message.]

By doing 'Japa' or repeating the above 8-line Mantra of Lord Narayan (Vishnu), one gets the same benefit or reward as got by repeating the famous 'Gayatri Mantra' one hundred times, as well as the OM Mantra ten thousand times. This 'Narayan Mantra' has the stupendous potentials to purify the person's ten past and ten future generations. In this way, a person who becomes enlightened about this 'Narayan Mantra' is able to attain the supreme abode of Lord Narayan at the time of his death (i.e. he obtains residence in Vaikunth which is the divine heaven where Lord Narayan or Vishnu eternally dwells).

Those who are expert, wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened, always focus their attention on that supreme, magnificent and most exalted abode of Lord Narayan. That abode is glorious, radiant and splendorous as the brilliant Sun visible to the eyes during the day time. That divine Lord Narayan is worthy of everlasting honour, worship, adoration and devotion. He is omnipotent and almighty, is always alert and vigilant, and is immensely glorious and magnificently radiant. The abode of Lord Vishnu is the best and the most exalted destination for a creature. This is verily what this Upanishad asserts. Hari OM salutations! Amen! [9].

[Note---The famous *Gayatri Mantra* is a hymn in honour of Brahm composed in the typical style of a 'Anustup Chanda'. That Mantra is the following--'OMBHURBHUVAHASVAHA¹, TATSAVIURVARENYAM², BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAH³, DHIYO YO NAH PRACODAYAT⁴'. It means 'OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial, the celestial and heavenly worlds. That Brahm is luminous like the Sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble path'. The four phrases of the Anushtup Chanda are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).

The Narayan Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, and the Tripadvibhūt Mahā-Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda exclusively deal with Lord Narayan in an exhaustive way.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—17

YAGYAVALKYA UPANISHAD

The 'Yagyavalkya Upanishad' is a major text dealing with the subject of 'Sanyas' which is a life of sincere renunciation and dispassion followed by ascetics, hermits, monks and friars who have broken all ties with this deluding world.

This Upanishad is a dialogue between sage Yagyavalkya and the wise king Janak who approached the sage to learn about Sanyas, such as its basic principles, the best time to accept it, the due process, the life that is expected to be led by those who accept this vow, and the various dos and don'ts. In the course of this discourse, sage Yagyavalkya lays down the guidelines of truthful Sanyas, especially its higher category called Paramhans. He emphasises the paramount importance and need for internal renunciation and dispassion rather than mere external pretensions because the latter would only be tantamount to cheating oneself and the society. He stresses that sexual perversion and inability to control lust, passion and carnal desires as well as anger, wrath and vengeance are two chief enemies against which a true Sanyasi (the follower of the path of Sanyas) should be cautious.

Sage Yagyavalkya was one of the most enlightened and self realised sages and seers of his time. A brief life sketch of the great sage is added at the end of this Upanishad named after him.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. 1. Once king Janak, who was also known as 'Videha' (i.e. a person who is not concerned about his body and remains in a perpetual state of meditation), went to sage

Yagyavalkya and said most humbly, ‘Oh Lord! Please be kind enough to preach me about ‘Sanyas’ (broadly referring to the fourth stage in the life of a man when he is supposed to renounce all his worldly attachments and lead a life of a reclusive and pious hermit, an ascetic, a monk or a wandering mendicant, spending his time in self introspection and meditation, and finally obtain spiritual liberation and deliverance from this mundane and deluding world of an endless cycle of birth and death)’.

At his request, sage Yagyavalkya expounded in great detail about the philosophy and salient features of the life of Sanyas. He said, ‘Oh king! A person should first live as a Brahmachari, and follow the principles and codes of conduct ordained for this way of life with due diligence. [This phase of life is called the Brahmacharya Ashram¹.] Then he should step into the second phase of life called the Grihasta Ashram². After having fully enjoyed the benefits and comforts that accrue in this life due to a family consisting of sons and wife etc., he should proceed to the forest to reside there in the third phase called the Vanprastha Ashram³. At the end of this phase, one should accept the fourth phase of life called the Sanyas Ashram⁴.

If he is able to have strict control over his sense organs, is able to exercise self-restraint on them, then he can enter the Sanyas Ashram directly from the first phase of life called Brahmacharya Ashram (skipping the two intermediary stages of Grihasta and Vanprastha Ashrams), or from the second phase called Grihasta (skipping the Vanprastha Ashram). In fact, whenever one develops steady, sincere and total renunciation, detachment and dispassion from this material world, one should take the vows of Sanyas the very same day without second thoughts.

Whether or not a Sanyasi (a follower of the path of Sanyas) observes the various sacraments, whether or not he is formally educated in the scriptures, whether or not he has done the fire sacrifice, as soon as the grand virtue of ‘Vairagya’, or exemplary renunciation, dispassion and detachment from this materialistic and deluding world sprouts in his heart, he should take the vows of Sanyas (1).

[Note-- The life of a man is divided into four segments or Ashrams—(a)

¹Brahmacharya —this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style, (b) ²Grihasta—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihasta Ashram which is a householder life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life and dealings with this deceptive world with all their accompanying horrifying problems, (c) ³Vanprastha —this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) ⁴Sanyas —this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and mediation, living a life of total renunciation and begging for food, and single mindedly aiming for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the

spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called 'Ashramo-panishad' belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.]

2. Once a person takes the vows of Sanyas, then some people do the fire sacrifice called 'Prajapatya Yagya'¹, while others do 'Agneya Yagya'² in order to obtain success in this spiritual endeavour. The latter fire sacrifice is preferred by some because this sacrifice involves worship of the sacred fire, and fire is synonymous with Pran which is a metaphor for life and vitality. This sacrifice honours and glorifies the Pran, and it gives more strength and powers to the Pran of the Sanyasi to help sustain him during the arduous spiritual journey that he is about to undertake.

At the time of these sacrifices, one should offer the three fundamental qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama that are inherently present in all the creatures in different proportions and decide their characters and personalities as offering to the sacred fire³. For this purpose, the following Mantras should be said to invoke the blessings of the Fire God—'Oh Fire God! You are being invited to ignite yourself and burn radiantly with your magnificent splendour in my bosom to enhance my glory and fame, my vitality and strength, my vigour and stamina. The Pran (vital winds that sustain life in a creature) is the factor which ignites and then sustains the eternal fire of life inside my bosom (for air is needed to keep any fire burning). Hence oh Fire God, please be firmly seated in my Pran which is your principal seat of origin, and keep burning there'. [In other words, the aspirant invokes the eternal fire to keep burning inside him and give him sufficient strength, courage, stamina and vigour so that he can overcome the great life of hardships that he would have to endure now onwards after taking the vows of Sanyas. He would not have proper food to eat, no proper place to rest, no bodily comforts that he had been accustomed to in his life as a householder. So the blessing of the Fire God is very important in order to sustain life inside the body through these hard times which he is destined to face as a Sanyasi.] (2).

[Note—¹The *Prajapatya Yagya* is done to propitiate and honour Brahma, the creator and chief guardian of the subjects, the 'Praja', of this creation. It is done in the very beginning of the life of Sanyas. In this sacrifice, all personal belongings are given away as charity. This ensures that the person would have nothing left behind that could act as an emotional pull after he had taken the vows of renunciation and become a wandering mendicant. This sacrifice also symbolically proclaims that the aspirant is sincere about his vows because he gives everything as charity, even those things that were very dear to him in his days as a householder or a student.

²The *Agneya Yagya* is a general fire sacrifice where the patron deity is the Fire God. The aspirant does this sacrifice in order to invoke the Fire God and enshrine him in his own Pran or Atma, i.e. in his vital winds and his pure consciousness.

³The aspirant offers his *three qualities* of 'Sata' 'Raja' and 'Tama' to the holy fire as a symbolic gesture that he is burning all his individuality along with all his unique qualities, temperaments and character traits that had marked him as an individual personality. He proclaims that now onwards he is neutral and devoid of any kind of ego, hypocrisy and self pride. This is a symbolic way by which the aspirant burns all his personal traits, ego and pride. He forgets that he has a special personality with special skills, knowledge, powers etc. He forgets that he had built assets and acquired such and such worldly successes before he had decided to literally forgo this claim to name and fame, to rescind his right to enjoy the fruits and comforts of the worldly material assets he had produced or acquired in life by his own

hard efforts, and in general treat everything around him as having nothing to do with him. Henceforth, he remains calm, unruffled, unmoving and steady—none of these three Gunas would ever cast their influences upon his character and behaviour. He henceforth remains without any taints that would scar his spiritual reputation. He aspires to become neutral, detached and dispassionate under all circumstances, treating everything with equanimity and forbearance, and this is possible only when all the character traits, all emotions and temperaments, all thoughts processes that are determined by these three qualities are completely annihilated or conquered. Such a person would become tolerant, forgiving, compassionate, magnanimous and full of equanimity and fortitude. He should be exemplary modest, humble, unpretentious, simple, pious, holy and adorable.

Briefly, these three qualities can be summarised as follows:--‘Sata Guna’ or quality is the noble, virtuous, auspicious and good quality present in a creature. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. (b) ‘Raja Guna’ or quality covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being. (c) ‘Tama Guna’ or quality is the third quality; it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc.—in brief, immoral, denigrating and depraved behaviour, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of misdemeanours. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to a person’s downfall, ignominy and ruin.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living.

These two fire sacrifices are done to ensure success in the new spiritual venture that the aspirant Sanyasi is about to undertake. He does the fire sacrifice because it is done at the beginning of any new enterprise, any new endeavour, or any new exercise in order to invoke divine intercession for successful completion of the entire process and accomplishing one’s desired goal without any hindrance.]

3. (When a person decides to take to the path of Sanyas, he should first perform the Agneya or fire sacrifice as described in verse no. 2.) For this purpose, he should bring a lighted fire (e.g. pieces of burning firewood) from some household in the village. In case the fire is not available, then the formality of the sacrifice can be done using only water because water is said to represent all the Gods in a composite form¹.

The aspirant should pray as follows—‘I am offering this sacrifice in honour of all the Gods’. Then he should utter the words ‘Swaha’ (which is always

said before formally offering anything meant for the deity to the sacred fire) as a token of his offering and a request that it be accepted by the Gods. The left over material used in the sacrifice, called Havi which is usually a mixture of various herbs, sesame seeds, rice grains, barley etc. all mixed together with clarified butter, should then be eaten by the aspirant Sanyasi as sanctified and blessed food. This Havi is said to possess mystical powers that removes all diseases.

(Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad describes in detail the entire process of doing a fire sacrifice in its Canto 6, Brahmin 3.)

The aspirant should focus his attention on the great Truths as enunciated by the three Vedas, called the 'Ved-trayi', by the means of great Mantras², and realise that the target or aim of all these Vedas and their Mantras is 'that Brahm'. [That is, the Sanyasi should prepare himself to worship only one 'truth' and it is Brahm which is the supreme transcendental Authority in creation and the ultimate place of rest for the soul. The realisation of this Brahm should henceforth be the only aim for the aspirant Sanyasi; he should not waver from this single aim of his life as a Sanyasi, and that is to attain that supreme Truth known as Brahm.]

'I have accepted the path and vows of Sanyas'—making this proclamation three times (to emphasise his firm resolve and emphatically assert that what he says is the truth), he should discard his sacred thread as well as shave off the tuft of hair on his head.

Sage Yagyavalkya said to Janak, 'Oh king Janak! This is indeed the dignified way to take to the great spiritual path of Sanyas' (3).

[Note—¹This is because *water* is the most important of all the primary elements that are needed to conceive and nurture life. In the beginning of creation itself, there was only 'Apaha' meaning water in its elementary form and as a cosmic jelly from which the rest of the visible as well as invisible creation moulded itself. Water is the primary and the most essential ingredient of life. (Refer Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 5/5/1 and 1/2/2.) The different Gods are symbols of the various facets or functions of life; they personify the various powers of Nature that govern the working of creation. Since no life is possible without water, the latter is deemed to incorporate all the Gods symbolising the various powers of Nature that not only conceive life but also nurture and enhance it. That is why in mythology Vishnu, who is a manifestation of the cosmic Viraat Purush, the invisible form of the supreme Lord who has revealed himself as the entire universe, is depicted as reclining on an ocean of milk called Kshir Sagar.

²The three primary Vedas are the Rig, Sam and Yajur. The great teachings of the Vedas are incorporated in the various Mantras that form their texts. These Mantras are in the form of hymns, and the three great noble Truths that they proclaim are the following—'You are I or Me', 'I am you' and 'I am Brahm'. These three sayings are the result of self-realisation by the Sanyasi, and they are the benchmarks for truly realised and enlightened souls. These sayings have been described in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 3/1/6 and 3/2/1 of chapter no. 10 of this volume as well as in Shukar Rahasya Upanishad belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 13th Upanishad.]

4. The king once again asked sage Yagyavalkya, 'Oh sage! How can one remain a Brahmin or can continue to be called a senior person of exalted stature as a Brahmin after he has abandoned the sacred marks, such as the sacred thread and the tuft of hair on the head at the time of taking to the path of Sanyas as described by you (in verse no.3)?'

The sage replied, 'The divine word OM (and its constant and consistent repetition) is the symbolic sacred thread for a Sanyasi. This OM is the Atma, the pure

consciousness, in the real sense for him. A person who does the fire sacrifice as described above (in verse no. 2-3), and then eats the remaining sanctified offering and cleanses his mouth with a sip of water three times—well, this is the only sanctioned way for him to accept the path of Sanyas¹. There is no need for him to either wear the sacred thread or the hair on the head (4).

[Note--¹That is, whether or not he is a Brahmin by birth, if a man takes to Sanyas, he is ordained to shed all external signs of his superior birth or knowledge. This is a practice to ensure that after having renounced his ties with the world the aspirant is not left with any vestige of his earlier life. It ensures that he has abandoned all sense of superiority, all complexes, and has instead risen above all stereo types. A Sanyasi is expected to have exemplary modesty who has erased all traces of his past life, all memory of his high birth as a Brahmin, and that he was revered and honoured by others as a senior and learned person prior to his taking to the path of Sanyas. This is because these considerations do not behoove of a person who is supposed to have become enlightened and realised the hollowness of honours that this mundane world bestows upon people depending upon their birth or knowledge. A Sanyasi is an enlightened pilgrim of the path leading to the supreme Brahm, and he is least concerned with such mundane considerations as keeping the sacred thread and the tuft of hair in order to prove his exalted stature in society; in fact he is not bothered about such things because he has realised that none of these external symbols has got anything to do with the realisation of the pure conscious Atma and the ultimate Truth of existence. When the Sanyasi has realised the truth about himself through the three great sayings as narrated in note to verse no. 3, such external signs become not only redundant but also superficial.]

5. A true Sanyasi (an honest and steady renunciate hermit, ascetic, mendicant, monk or a friar) should wear ochre clothes, have a clean shaved head, not ask or accept anything other than absolutely necessary food, should be exemplarily pure and uncorrupt in every way (i.e. by his deeds, actions, behaviour, mind, body, heart, thoughts, intentions etc.), should not harbour any malice, ill-will, jealousy, hatred, animosity, or any other such negative emotions and thoughts for any creature, and should eat by begging. Such a person, by diligently and carefully walking on this path of Sanyas, is able to attain the supreme stature known as 'Brahm Pad' which is the realisation of the supreme Truth about his own self as the Atma which is pure consciousness and an embodiment of supreme enlightenment. That is why he becomes one like Brahm himself; he becomes a personified image of Brahm, because the Atma is a manifestation of Brahm.

This is the sanctified path or means to be adopted by a Sanyasi; these are the doctrines that are to be followed by him in order to enable him to become Brahm-realised; to make him eligible to acquire the exalted stature of a person who has become one with Brahm. These are the principal guidelines laid down for a Sanyasi who wishes to ultimately accomplish emancipation and salvation for himself by finally ending his life by entering a water body (such as a lake or a river), the fire (such as the funeral pyre lit to burn a dead body, the only difference being that the Sanyasi voluntarily enters it while still alive), dying for a great cause or mission which is called obtaining the 'Vir-Gati' (i.e. the end meant for those who are bold, brave and courageous), and natural death of the body while meditating, called Mahaprasthan. [The word literally means to embark upon the great spiritual path that leads one to final emancipation and salvation.]

In all these ends, though his mortal body perishes, his Atma, which is his truthful and pure self as well as cosmic consciousness called Brahm personified, continues to live because it is imperishable. This is an enlightened, holistic and

dignified view about the 'self' and 'Brahm' which is very rare to come across and difficult to acquire, but once achieved and realised it makes the Sanyasi well versed in the essential but profound truth about Brahm. In other words, such a Sanyasi becomes Brahm-realised or Brahm personified! [This is because his Atma is a personification of the supreme transcendental authority of creation known as Brahm, and the Sanyasi has realised that it is the Atma which is his truthful identity. So, he is indeed Brahm.]'

Sage Yagyavalkya said—Oh king, this is the way for true Sanyas that I have narrated for you (5).

6. Now I shall mention the names of some of those great sages who were called Paramhans Sanyasis¹. These persons had no external symbols of their exalted spiritual stature, no overt signs of their internal divine and accomplished spiritual nature, and no one could judge their true elevated spiritual state of being, mystical powers and auspiciousness by their external behaviours and temperaments. Though outwardly they appeared to be aggressive, arrogant and intoxicated with pride and self assertion, they were really quite the opposite in reality.

Some of such great Sanyasis are the following—Samvartak, Aruni, Shwetketu, Durvasa, Ribhu, Nidagh, Dattatreya, Shuk, Vamedo, Haritak etc. (6).

[Note—¹The *Paramhans* is a class of Sanyasi who is superior to ordinary Sanyasi.

This term has been elaborately explained in other Upanishads dealing with this subject, notably the Paramhanso-panishad which is chapter no. 5 of this volume.]

7. [The following verse nos. 7-13 describe the code of conduct and ethics that a self-respecting and dignified Sanyasi ought to steadfastly follow in order not only to maintain his own prestige and dignity but also to honour the exalted stature and uphold the reputation and dignity of the eclectic institution of Sanyas.]

A Sanyasi should not look at the women of other people, should not stay in a city or town or any other inhabited place, and should discard all his personal possessions and signs, both external as well as internal¹, that had marked him out as a Sanyasi in the initial stages of Sanyas—such as the Tridand (a thin bamboo staff carried by a Sanyasi which has two short pieces of wood, each measuring about four fingers in width, tied at the top end as a handle; it derives its name from the three controls that a true Sanyasi is supposed to observe—viz. control over his speech called the Vaag-dand, control over his body called the Kaye-dand and control over his mind called the Mana-dand), the Kamandalu (the water pot), the Bhukta Patra (the pot for accepting food; the begging bowl), the Jalpavitra (the brush made of Kush grass and used to sprinkle water on the body as a purification rite), the Shikha (the tuft of hair on the head), the Yogyopavit (the sacred thread) etc.—into the water (of a river, a stream, a lake, a pond or any other water body available) by pronouncing the word 'Bhu Swaha' (which means that I am paying obeisance to earth, or Bhu, by offering these things to it as my sacrificial offering, or Swaha).

Having done this, he should constantly, consistently and persistently contemplate and meditate upon his Atma, his pure conscious self, and delve into its pure nature as the supreme transcendental Brahm personified (7).

[Note—¹The external signs are mentioned in this verse, and they are the Tridand, Kamandalu, Bhukta Patra, Jalpavatri, Shikha and Yogyapavit. The internal signs refer to the latent Vasanas or worldly passions, desires, yearnings and lusts, as well as Vrittis or the temperaments, tendencies, habits and inclinations that are inherent to all living beings and together mould its behaviour, character traits and personality. The external signs are easy to discard, but equally important is the elimination of the internal ones because it is the latter that actually impedes one's spiritual progress for

the simple reason that they directly affect his mind and intellect. The various Vasanas and Vrittis are like enemies hidden within the rank of the army, and unless and until they are dealt with judiciously and expeditiously, they are bound to cause nuisance for the Sanyasi. So he should endeavour to assiduously cast aside all such things that act as a bind or impediment in his spiritual progress and freedom—whether they are external symbols mentioned in the main text, or the internal fetters of the mind, intellect and the heart as noted in this note.

Earlier, verse no. 3 has said that if fire is not available, the Sanyasi should offer his oblations to the water because water incorporates all the Gods. Earth as well as the different water bodies such as the river and stream, are the two elements in Nature which are always present in a visible gross form. Both the earth and the water can be touched and felt. There are two symbolic offerings made simultaneously here—one to the *earth* and the other to the *water*. By uttering the words *Bhu Swaha*, the Sanyasi symbolically burns all the vestiges of his worldly life by offering them to the latent fire present inside the earth and then disperses their remains or ashes into the water. Aside of this, by offering all his external symbols to the water, the Sanyasi literally washes his hands from them for good. He washes his hands from all vestiges of his links with the external world, for now he has only his body and his Atma as his only possession. In the earlier stages of Sanyas, the Sanyasi is ordained to carry all the external signs that are mentioned in verse no. 7, but as he progresses in his spiritual journey, as he matures and rises higher and higher in his spiritual pursuits, these seem cumbersome to him and appear like a burden for him. He begins to treat them much the same way as he has been treating other material possessions of the world. They become more of a hindrance rather than an aid. So he voluntarily chucks them, he disowns them, he discards them in order to feel light and free in his journey.]

8. A Sanyasi should wear minimum of clothes (e.g. just a loin cloth), should remain even, calm, unruffled, poised and equitable during opposing, contradictory and adverse circumstances (such as hot and cold, sorrows and joys, pains and comforts, praises and insults), maintain his poise and be free from all agitations, perplexities and consternations, should not have any worldly possessions of any kind, should be of a pure and clean heart that is diligently and honestly engrossed in following the spiritual path of Brahm realisation, should beg for food and eat just enough to sustain his life, called his Pran, should not be bothered about either loss or gain, should use a hollowed out coconut shell or his cupped palms to accept food during his begging forays, and drink water from the water pot (made from hollowed out pumpkin). He should roam about freely and cheerfully in this world, all the while voluntarily and gladly observing these rules.

He should seek food which is just enough to fill his stomach for the time being, and should not stock anything to eat later. For residence, he should select a secluded, calm and serene place where he won't face any hurdle in his spiritual thoughts or have any disturbance to his peace. Some of the places from which he should select for his temporary abode are an abandoned and ruined building, a temple/shrine, a thatched hut, an anthill, the shade of a tree, a potter's hut, the site of a fire sacrifice, the bank of a river, inside a cave, on a huge boulder near a waterfall, etc.

He should gradually annihilate his deeds and their effects by diverting his mind away from them, and when he finally abandons his mortal body after having faithfully and diligently followed the rigorous path as laid down for a Sanyasi, he is proclaimed as a 'Paramhans' (literally, the one who is like the great bird Swan which is considered as the purest and wisest bird as it picks only the best from what is

available; here it refers to the fact that he has achieved the most exalted stature reserved for highly acclaimed Sanyasis) (8).

9. Wearing his skin as his only cloth (i.e. remaining naked), he sees the same Brahm in all the creatures, and therefore does not deem it necessary and fit to bow before anybody¹. He should remain indifferent and dispassionate towards his family, including his wife, children etc. He should deliberately forsake all dealings in this world and have nothing to do with anything, whether visible or invisible, tangible or intangible. [That is, he should remain mentally and emotionally neutral, stoic, dispassionate, detached and disassociated while living in this world, and possess such noble qualities as equanimity, evenness of mind and thoughts, equality in behaviour towards all the creatures when interacting with them, and possess other such noble and auspicious virtues that are possessed by great souls.]

Such an exalted Sanyasi is indeed equivalent to the Parmeshwar, the supreme Lord² (9).

[Note--¹It is not because he is haughty and hypocrite but because he sees an image of himself in the other creature; or he remains so engrossed in meditating upon the supreme Brahm that he is oblivious of the presence of another person; or since he has realised that the truthful form of all the creatures is not their body but their Atma which is Brahm personified, and that he himself is an image of that Brahm, he finds nothing superior in the other person for which he should bow before him. Further, by remaining naked he does not mean any indecency or immodesty, but only stresses the point that he has nothing to hide about himself, and that he sees all bodies alike, whether that body belongs to a young woman or an old man. After all, the skin is the natural cover provided by the creator to protect the body from the vagaries of Nature, and therefore there is no need to add additional layers of clothes to wrap it; it is like trying to protect something from getting wet that has already been wrapped in a length of plastic sheet with another sheet, which is a stupid act. See verse no. 10-13 below.

²This deduction is easy to understand because the supreme Lord does not distinguish between any two individuals and treats all the creatures alike. The supreme Lord or Brahm has the sky as his cloth, and he remains uniformly and universally distributed throughout the length and breadth of the creation, being present in those things that are visible as well as those that are not visible. True Brahm-realisation in a Sanyasi arises when he begins to think this way.]

10. A Sanyasi should bow (i.e. honour, pay his obeisance and show his respects) only to such people who have taken the vows of Sanyas prior to him (as they are more experienced and senior to him in the spiritual path), or to them who are Dharma personified (i.e. those persons who exemplify the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility of thoughts and conduct). Except these people, he should not bow before anyone else (10).

11. It is not unusual to see a Sanyasi who is disgraced and fallen from his chosen path, who is indolent and lazy, who has diverted and gone astray from his righteous path, who is extrovert, talks a lot, is showy and pretentious, who is indulgent in pursuit of sensual gratification and seeking pleasures like an animal, who is fond of conflicts and has a predilection for unnecessary quarreling, discussions, debates, arguments and brawls even at trifles and inconsequential matters that should not bother him at all in the first place, and who wrongly interprets the tenets of the Vedas and the great doctrines of the other scriptures and their intentions (i.e. he misrepresents and

misconstrues what the scriptures say to suit his own personal goals and vested interests) (11).

[Note—The intention of this verse is to highlight the fact that merely taking to the path of Sanyas is no guarantee of spiritual success in self-realisation and Brahm-realisation as well as achieving liberation and deliverance from the fetters that tie down the soul of a creature to this deluding world, for there are numerous examples when a man was better off before he took the vows of Sanyas, for indulging in things that are prohibited for a Sanyas way of life are only counter-productive and tantamount to cheating one's own self. They not only demote the Sanyasi and make him an object of scorn and ridicule but demean the entire holy institution of Sanyas. It is like defiling, polluting and corrupting this holy institution. Therefore, it's an unpardonable sin. The bad example of one Sanyasi would boomerang and cause dishonour for all other innocent and sincere Sanyasis who may otherwise be immaculate and as holy and pious as they can be.]

12. An exalted Sanyasi who transcends the limitations and restrictions as well as expectations imposed by such mundane things as having a name or title (such as being called a Brahmin, a Kshatriya, a Vaishya or a Shudra), a (permanent) residence (such as a hermitage, a monastery etc.), having some or the other vocation or profession (such as a preacher, a preceptor, a spiritual guide or even being a monk or a spiritual healer) and stage of life (such as childhood, adulthood, old age etc.), who is established in an exalted position in the higher echelons of Sanyas-hood (i.e. is a celebrated Sanyasi), who stays in the realm where he is the sovereign (i.e. he is subjected to no worldly compulsions and formalities where he needs to appease anyone or do something against his wish), who firmly believes in the concept of non-duality and therefore sees nothing else other than the 'self' everywhere, who has a steady and unwavering mind and intellect not subject to various dilemmas, confusions, vexations and perplexities, and who is engrossed and well steeped in the knowledge of the self or the awareness of the Atma which is pure consciousness—say, why should he bow before anybody else because he sees his own image, his own Atma in all the rest of the creation. For such a Sanyasi, no formal work is left to be done or formalities to be observed in this world (12).

13. [An erudite and enlightened person who is aware of the non-dual nature of the Atma and the fact that all the creatures are essentially the same because all have the same Atma residing inside their bosom and marking their identity—there is no one more worthy than himself who should be shown more respect than that shown to one's own self or one's own Atma. That is why he does not bow before others.] But in case he decides to bow and pay his obeisance to someone, then he would have no second thoughts or hesitations before bowing before a horse, a chandal (a low caste), a cow, or even a donkey. This is because he is firmly convinced that the supreme Lord called Ishwar is present in all the living beings uniformly as their Jiva or the essential element called 'life' that is universally present in all things that 'live' in this creation. Therefore, all the creatures are manifestations of the same Lord for an enlightened Sanyasi, and he does not distinguish between any two creatures depending upon the body that they possess (13).

[Note—What a fantastic and superb observation! A person who has honestly reached this state of equanimity and enlightenment so as to see no difference between a man and a horse—not because he is out of his senses and gone nuts, but because he sees beyond their physical bodies to see the Atma residing inside it—is indeed Brahm-realised. This view is Advaita Vedanta in practice.]

14. [The following verses are meant to address the weakest point in the defensive armour of any man, the weakest point in his character because it is one lust which he finds almost overbearing and difficult to overcome. A man can overcome his desire for worldly fame, money, material comforts and pleasures, but it is rather difficult to easily overcome the temptation offered by a female.]

A women's body is made up of flesh and marrow, and is like a carry-bag consisting of the stomach filled with veins, bones and various internal organs. This bag goes here and there without any particular objective. Say, what is so alluring in this body? What is so charming and adorable in it? (14).

15. Separate all the individual parts of the body of a woman and look at them individually—the skin, the flesh, the blood, the tears and the eyes. Do they at all look charming and adorable? If not, say then, why do you become so infatuated and enamoured by her? Why are you so enchanted and lured by her? (15).

16. The garland hanging around her robust and well formed breasts have been compared to a stream of the river Ganges cascading down from the peaks of mount Meru. Truly indeed, this garland or necklace resembles that stream (16).

17. The breast of a woman severed from her body and lying unattended in a cremation ground, or lying randomly at any other place, is fed upon by stray dogs as if they were ordinary dog-feed or lump of meat (17).

18. A woman with beautifully plaited hairs, eyes adorned with a paint of lampblack (*collyrium*), difficult to touch (i.e. difficult to please and access, and therefore igniting greater desire and longing), most pleasing and enticing for the eyes of the beholder, and who is like a burning flame of a candle—such a woman is potent enough to reduce a man to ashes just like a twig is burned as soon as it comes in contact with a raging fire (18).

19. A woman can be tormenting and scorching even from a distance (just like a blazing fire). Though women appear very amiable, friendly, sweet, tender and attractive, they have the potential to suck out the sap of vitality and vigour from the person who falls in the alluring trap of their deceptive charm. They resemble the firewood of hell; they are no less tormenting than the hell itself though they appear to be sweet and enticing like a sweet and cold pudding (19).

20. The hunter in the guise of Kamdeo-cupid (the patron god of lust, passions, beauty, sensual pleasures, physical attractions and longing), in order to trap a man who is like a bird, has cast his net represented by a woman who has a natural aptitude to charm a man's heart and thereby lure him towards the net (20).

21. For men who are like fish swimming and squirming around in the filthy slush and scum representing the lustful tendencies of their heart, in a pond representing birth in this entrapping world, a woman is like a bait attached to the hook, representing various Vasanas (passions and lustfulness, desires for carnal pleasures and sensual gratification), of the fishing rod (21).

22. Only God can protect a man from a woman symbolising a basket of worthless and faulty pieces of gems representing sorrows, sufferings, torments and miseries of all hues (22).

[Note—The man thinks that a beautiful damsel by his side, clinging to his arms, would enhance his value in society just like a basket full of gems slung across his shoulders is an asset worth flaunting and being proud of. But he is unaware of the fact that the same basket would be the cause of much problem for him as it would arouse jealousy amongst his peers who would try every trick they know to divest him with the treasure, even if the basket is full of artificial gems. It creates suspicion and may even land him in great trouble by inviting thieves; he may be accused of getting it by some unscrupulous means, or even cheating others by misrepresenting facts and pretending them to be genuine gems. Worst, if he is weak, his treasured basket would be snatched in front his eyes and usurped by someone stronger than him, leading to endless heart-burn, a sense of inferiority complex, of being impotent, of jealousy, hatred, animosity and strife. What good is such a basket of gems to him? Likewise, what good is such a woman to him, because the same types of problems would be created.]

23. A person who happens to be in constant contact (company) of a woman is lured or incited or cajoled or provoked to enjoy her, but a person who has no contact with a woman, say with whom would he enjoy and gratify his sensual desires? Indeed, if a man can forsake the company of a woman, he has forsaken the world along with all its traps, its allurements, its attractions and its charms for all practical purposes. And when a man has forsaken the world and its charms as well as its agonies and sufferings, its troubles and tribulations, he naturally obtains abiding peace and happiness (23).

[Note—This is because he would be free from so many sins that he would otherwise ordinarily commit just in order to please his lady; he would not be trapped into raising a family and get bogged down in its upkeep and spend his entire life in the turmoil that follows. Devoid of mental agitations and sexual arousals, he would be left to himself in peace, preserve his vitality and energy, and can then divert his immense potentials to do something constructive for the rest of the society instead of being selfish about his woman and family. When a man is in eyeshot and earshot of anything that is alluring then it is natural for him as a human being to fall for it, and even if he is able to control his natural instincts then this effort alone would sap a lot of his energy. So a man who has nothing to do with woman is indeed a lucky man whose spiritual journey becomes all the more easier.]

24. Even a son is the one who gives, or is the cause of so many pains, sorrows and sufferings. Without a son parents are very uneasy and frustrated; they yearn for at least one son. When a son is somehow conceived, there is the fear of abortion and the horrors of the excruciating pain of delivery at the time of his birth (24).

25. If somehow the son manages to get born (i.e. is not pre-maturely aborted), he is tormented and afflicted by a host of problems such as diseases and the bad effects of malignant stars etc. If he manages to survive these, there is a good chance that he might go wayward and become mischievous and out of control for his parents, causing them immense frustration, dismay, distress, consternation and perplexity; he might become a liability for them. Though he is formally initiated by a wise teacher and sincere attempts are made to educate him, he might still remain stupid and ignorant. Even if these problems do not crop up, then his marriage might become difficult and irksome (25).

26. Besides the above, there is the constant fear of his becoming sexually pervert and promiscuous. Even if everything else goes alright and he eventually gets married and manages to raise a family, there are the problems associated with the rearing of a large family, such as arranging for their feeding, upkeep and general welfare. Thus there is no count of sufferings and pains, of troubles and tribulations that have their cause in the son, or are associated with the desire to have a son.

Further, it is also observed that many rich people do not have offspring or heirs, and even if they have they die prematurely. These are some of the innumerable miseries associated with the son (26).

[Note—It must be noted here that a man gets a son only when he is sexually associated with a woman, and this Upanishad on the life and times of a Sanyasi expressly prohibits such company. The troubles associated with having a son are pointed out to emphasise the fact that the culmination of a man's relationship with a woman is the family with a son as its crown jewel, and the great hope that the son would take care of the father during his old age. If peace and comfort is not destined for him, then merely having a son is no guarantee of peace and happiness. On the contrary, it might only add to his woes. So it is better for him to avoid a woman altogether.]

27. An ascetic's hands, legs, eyes and speech should not be fickle and restless, wondering here and there in a freakish manner, jumping from this object to that. He should be fully in control of his sense organs. It is only then that he can fulfill the grand vows of Brahmacharya (celibacy, continence, abstinence and self restraint from all indulgences, especially those related with sensual pleasures and carnal gratification) (27).

28. An erudite, wise, sagacious, enlightened and knowledgeable Sanyasi who sees no difference between an enemy and his body that is tied by the various shackles pertaining to this deluding world (i.e. who treats his own body as his greatest enemy rather than some other person as being the enemy), never gets annoyed and angry at others even as he does not get peeved and angry at his own body and its various organs (28).

[Note--This is obvious, because every living being loves his body more than anything else. Since a wise ascetic treats his body as having an independent existence than his true self which is the Atma, he begins to see the various faults that are associated with the body as he would see them in an enemy. Even as an enemy creates constant worry and annoyance and is the cause of perpetual restlessness for a person, the Sanyasi also treats his body as a shackle and an annoying burden that prevents him from finding liberation and deliverance as well as peace and happiness of mind. The body constantly keeps nagging at him for food when it is hungry, for water when it is thirsty, for rest when it is tired, for warmth when it is too cold for it to cope with, etc. The body has the mind as its subtle component, and this mind is known to be more restless than the gross body itself, jumping from one subject to another subject in a constant cycle of thoughts and counter-thoughts. In such a scenario, there is no chance for the Sanyasi to ever find eternal peace. That is why the body is treated as an enemy because the latter also robs a man of his peace and happiness.]

29. A person who shows anger and vengeance on other people should be asked why he not vents his anger and wrath on these emotions of anger and vengefulness themselves. [That is, why doesn't he control his own anger, wrathfulness and vengefulness instead of venting these negative emotions on others, especially when it

is an established fact that the same Atma resides in all the creatures? Is he not aware of the tenet proclaimed in verse no. 28 above that the greatest enemy of a person is his own body?]

This tendency to be angry, wrathful and vengeful is the greatest obstacle and deterrent in accomplishing success in any worldly enterprise (because it creates ill-will, hatred and animosity instead of amity and goodwill, and the former can never be conducive to any success whatsoever in any field in this world). Besides this, anger, wrathfulness and vengefulness are the greatest hurdles in obtaining the rewards or fruits of any endeavour, such as Artha (financial wellbeing), Dharma (the auspicious benefits of righteousness, nobility of thoughts and conduct, probity and propriety), Kaam (fulfillment of worldly desires) and Moksha (obtaining emancipation and salvation) (29).

30. I repeatedly bow (in sarcasm and satirically) before this element of 'Kop' (anger, wrath, vengefulness) which has the majestic powers to undercut and destroy with impunity one's self respect, dignity, prestige and standing in society, and literally reduce him to ashes (because everything done by him fails as he gets no support from anyone; he is filled with frustration leading to depression of spirit and lack of enthusiasm which is an important factor for success in any enterprise).

I repeatedly pay my obeisance to 'Kop' which has made me aware of my shortcomings and failures.

[This is because I find others who are more cool-headed and friendly succeeding in fields where I have failed, inspiring me to analyse the causes of my failures. It is then that I realise that my tendency to become angry at trifles has ruined my reputation and made me hated and shunned. This realisation kindles disgust and dismay in me towards my own faults and failings which has been the cause of my failure in obtaining success in acquiring the above four fruits for my endeavours in this world.]

This failure to acquire the four fruits has spurred a sense of renunciation and disinterest in me about all things pecuniary and pertaining to this mundane world.

[Had I been a successful man in my worldly enterprises, I would have remained surrounded by a host of worldly goodies and remained engrossed in enjoying these four fruits. Failure has instilled a sense of renunciation in me, albeit a forced one or one induced by circumstances. But nevertheless anger has been at the forefront of my getting disillusioned from this world as I have lost all my friends and am surrounded by enemies. People shun me, I am not welcome anywhere, I am filled with frustration and dismay. And all these factors have been conducive in my losing all interests in this world. That is why I thank my anger for kindling renunciation and dispassion in me, though for all the wrong reasons, but nevertheless for my long term good.] (30).

31. When ordinary people 'sleep' (i.e. when they lose control of their senses and become impotent in doing anything while asleep; when they literally let down their guard), a self restrained and self controlled man (such as an ascetic, a friar, a monk, a mendicant, a hermit etc.) remains 'awake' (i.e. he remains alert and vigilant). On the contrary, when ordinary people 'keep awake' (i.e. when they remain engrossed by their body and mind in pursuing the world during their waking state of consciousness), such self realised and enlightened Yogis (ascetics) are 'sleeping soundly' in a state called Sushupta (i.e. they are in a state of deep sleep state of consciousness which is a symbolic state when the conscious is totally removed from the delusions created by this material world of sense objects and remains oblivious of them) (31).

[Note—When ordinary people are ignorant of what is happening around them as when they are asleep, i.e. when they are ignorant of the truth and reality of this world and themselves, an ascetic remains conscious of the truth and reality. On the other hand, when these ordinary people think that they are conscious of the world around them which they think, in their ignorance and delusions, is the real thing, the ascetic literally shuns such ignorant based deluding conceptions and prefers to be asleep and remain ignorant as far as the existence of this mirage is concerned. They shut their eyes to all the alluring charms and temptations of the world while an ordinary man indulges in the same world like a fish taking to water. This ‘sleeping’ and ‘remaining awake’ are only metaphors to highlight metaphysical principles concerning what is the truth and reality and what is simply delusion and mirage.]

32. An ascetic should be firmly convinced that he is pure consciousness personified, that the entire creation is nothing else but a manifestation of the eternal Spirit or consciousness, and this entity is immutable, infinite and uniform. ‘I as well as the rest of the creation am the same pure consciousness that is eternal, immaculate and supreme’ (32).

33. The most exalted sage (Yagyavalkya) asserted that the tenets of this Upanishad proclaim that obtaining the ultimate emancipation and salvation of the soul should be the final and only goal of an enlightened, erudite and wise ascetic; there is nothing more better to aim for, and nothing more exalted in stature than it. Thus ends this Upanishad propounded and expounded by the great sage (Yagyavalkya). Amen! (34).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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A brief life sketch of sage Yagyavalka

Sage Yagyavalkya belonged to that Vedic period when people had an integral and holistic view of life and the reality behind existence, and all-activities, secular or religious, were regarded as one big, wholesome and composite religious sacrifice called a Yagya. Life itself was consecrated and devoted to the realization of the transcendental and supreme truthful Reality. There was no distinction between renunciation and involvement in life’s chores. There was no dichotomy between the two, and the various debates arising in Indian spiritual practices due to different interpretations and re-interpretations of the Vedic and Upanishadic tenets was a product of the later period. One such exemplary sage and seer belonging to that golden period was Yagyavalkya—he was an enlightened wise man who was not only a self-realised householder but an ardent ascetic, an acclaimed scholar and an exemplary renunciate man par-excellence, all at the same time.

It is believed that Yagyavalkya was an incarnation of Lord Brahma, the creator, when he was cursed by Lord Shiva. [Skand Puran, Nagar Khand, 1-9.] His father was named Brahmabahu (literally, the limbs of Brahma, because the latter’s limbs had manifested as this person). [Vayu Puran, 61.] But according to a book of religious law written by Yagyavalkya himself known as ‘Yagyavalkya Sanhita’, his father also had the same name. So, our Yagyavalkya was, in effect, ‘Yagyavalkya, the second’. [Yagyavalkya Sanhita, 1.]

Yagyavalkya’s teacher in the science of Yoga (meditation) and the knowledge of the self (metaphysics and philosophy) was sage Vashistha, son of Hiranyanabha

Kaushalya, a king of the Raghu dynasty which ruled Ayodhya in ancient times. [Vayu Puran, 88; Bhagwat Mahapuran, 93/106.] The sage performed severe penances and austerities, known as Tapa, at Mithila, the birth place of Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram. [Skandpuran, Reva Khand, 42.]

He used to attend the court of great ancient wise kings, such as king Janak (the father of Sita—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, canto 3-4) and Yudhishthir (of the Mahabharat fame—Mahabharat, Sabha Parva, 4/32). It was in the court of king Janak that Yagyavalkya had defeated all the assembled scholars of the time on various metaphysical and theological concepts. He is also believed to be a chief priest in Yudhishthir's Rajsu Yagya.

Sage Yagyavalkya was one of the greatest, most erudite, wise and renowned seers of his time. He was a senior and enlightened man, so wise and learned a scholar that even king Janak, who himself was a most self-realised and enlightened king of his era, was so much bowled over by his erudition, depth of knowledge and scholarship that he accepted the sage's discipleship (refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahmin 2, verse nos. 1, 4). He was proclaimed the undisputed champion and winner in a metaphysical and theological debate held in the court of Janak during the course of a great fire sacrifice held where great scholars, seers and sages from far and wide had assembled (refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 1-9).

He was a much sought after teacher and an honoured exponent of the eclectic Advaita Vedanta philosophy of non-duality. This basically propounds, inter alia, that everything in existence, visible or invisible, minute or colossal, important or unimportant, are all fundamentally the same singular unit called Brahm manifested in myriad and diverse ways, that therefore nothing that exists which is not Brahm is not true, that this Brahm is the only supreme Authority and Divinity in the entire creation, that this Brahm and the individual Atma or pure consciousness of the creature are one and the same, and not two independent units, that this Atma is the pure self, etc. Anything contrary to this is false and fallacious.

It is believed that all major Upanishads belonging to the Yajur Veda tradition are either directly or indirectly expounded and enunciated by and elucidated upon by Yagyavalkya or any one of his long line of disciples who had acquired this eclectic knowledge from him. (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/6/1-3, 4/6/1-3 and 6/5/1-3.)

The high spiritual prowess and reach of Yagyavalkya can be judged from the fact that he could communicate directly with the Supreme Being called Mandal Purush in his visible manifestation as the brilliant and splendorous Sun as described in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. The fact that Yagyavalkya had a repeated communion with the Sun God, at least on four occasions is clearly marked out in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/1/1-2; 2/1/1-2; 3/1/1-2; 4/1/1-2.

Yagyavalkya was a rich householder sage and seer. This is borne out by the fact that (a) on each occasion when he attended great debates he was showered with huge largesse by king Janak in the form of immense quantity of gold and thousands of cows (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 3/1/1-2, 4/1/1-7, 4/3/33, 4/4/23), and (b) when he asks his wife Maitreyi to partition his vast estate before he went on to take Sanyas (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/4/1-2, 4/5/1-2).

The creation of Yajur Veda's two branches:- Yagyavalkya was one of the several disciples of sage Vaishampayana. Once the teacher asked his disciples to perform the 'Brahmavadhya' sacrifice (a type of penance) for him. Yagyavalkya was so confident

of himself that he offered to do it all by himself for his teacher. The teacher thought that he was haughty and boastful. So, disowning or disinheriting him from his line of disciples, he commanded that Yagyavalkya should return all that he had learnt from his teacher. The sage returned all the Mantras of the Yajur Veda that he had learnt from his teacher by 'vomiting' them out. The rest of the disciples were very cunning; they transformed themselves immediately into partridges, called Tittars, and gobbled up everything. From that developed the Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriya branch. It is called 'Krishna' after the teacher, and 'Taittiriya' after the partridges.

Now, not to be demoralised so easily, Yagyavalkya worshipped the Sun God who blessed him with a fresh set of Mantras of the Yajur Veda. Since it came from the 'bright sun', this set of Mantras was called the 'Shukla Yajur Veda'. [The word 'Shukla' means 'bright or light or illuminated'.] The sage revised this into fifteen sub-texts, called the Vajasanis, i.e. those belonging to the horse race. This is because the Sun God had assumed the form of a 'horse' to teach him, and the word 'Vajis' means a horse.

Yagyavalkya had fifteen disciples (e.g. Kanva, Madhyandin etc.) who mastered one each of these fifteen sub-text created by Yagyavalkya. [Vishnu Puran, 3-5; Vayu Puran, 60-1.]

Family:- He had two wives—the elder was named Katayani, and the second was called Maitreyi. From the elder wife, he had a son named Katyanana. [Skandpuran, Nagar Khand, 130; Brihad Aranya Upanishad, 4/5/1.] According to 'Yogi Yagyavalkya', a hand book on Yoga, his third wife was Gargi, though she is depicted as a rival interviewer who tested the sage's erudition and scholarship in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad. [Yogi Yagyavalkya, edited by Upendranath, Vasumati — Calcutta, 1-5.]

Sanyas:- Though Yagyavalkya was externally a householder sage and seer, he was internally a self-realised and an enlightened man, a sincere ascetic and a renunciate monk who knew the futility of worldly pursuits. He was not preaching what he did not believe in. So he finally took to the eclectic path of Sanyas as clearly mentioned in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 4/5/15.

Works:- Yagyavalkya wrote great texts on Yoga, metaphysics and law pertaining to daily life, much like Manu's Smiriti Law. (i) Yagyavalkya Sanhita contains religious laws; (ii) Yog Sanhita was composed in the hermitage of sage Upmanyu [Kurma Puran, 25.]; and (iii) Yogi Yagyavalkya on Yoga philosophy.

Yagyavalkya was a great and acclaimed Yogi (an ascetic) as well as a metaphysical philosopher and preacher par excellence who was well-versed in the knowledge of Brahm and the Atma.

-----Shanti Paath-----

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CHAPTER—18

SHATTYA-YANI UPANISHAD

The 'Shattyayani Upanishad' has forty verses in all which enumerate the salient features of a 'Vishnu Ling Sanayasi'. A Sanyasi is basically a person who has renounced the attractions of this materialistic world because he has realised its futility and falsehood. This realisation comes with wisdom and enlightenment. He then begins to pursue the 'truth', and this puts him on the path of self-realisation which is the awareness of the pure self as the Atma, which in turn is a microcosm of the supreme Brahm. The virtues that such person should inculcate have been enumerated in detail in this Upanishad.

The word 'Sanyasi' covers all such exalted souls who come under the general category of a renunciate ascetic, a friar, a hermit, a mendicant, a recluse or a monk, while the word 'Ling' refers to the external signs or behavior patterns that help to identify such persons. This Upanishad especially deals with that Sanyasi who is a devotee of Lord Vishnu and hence called a 'Vishnu Ling', and who has completely dissociated himself honestly from this deluding material world and pursues the path of spiritual enhancement leading to self realisation and self purification. This ultimately leads him to the realisation of the ultimately Truth about himself and the creation, and helps him to break free from the endless cycle of transmigration.

This Upanishad comprehensively details the way of life of a true Sanyasi (a true renunciate person), the codes of ethical, moral and behavioral conduct, the various sacraments, rites and vows he is expected to observe, his spiritual stature, his virtues, his external signs and internal temperaments, and all other relevant matters pertaining to such a rigorous, spiritual life. Emphasis is laid on the fact that more than the out worldly behaviour it is the internal purity, sincerity and diligence which leads to the upliftment of the soul that really matters. The main thrust is on honest, robust, and effective self realisation as well as self purification in a comprehensive manner. Stress is laid on the metaphysical, spiritual and ethereal aspects of Sanyas than the mere physical following a set of rites and codes.

Finally, the horrible consequences of falling astray from this path are mentioned along with the unprecedented great benefits that can be got by being steadfast, faithful and diligent in this endeavour.

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Shanti Paath

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1 of this anthology.

1. It is the Mana (the subtle mind and emotional heart; the thoughts and emotions) of a man that is the cause of all his shackles which tie him down to this entrapping and deluding material world, and it is the same Mana that gives him freedom and deliverance from them. The Mana that has a tendency to get attracted towards and attached to the myriad attractions, the numerous comforts and pleasures of the sense organs that are derived from the objects of this material world is the cause of all

spiritual bondages for a man. On the other hand, a Mana turned away from them leads to liberation from those bondages [1].

2. Like the way this Mana is hitched or hooked to the sensual pleasures as well as the myriad comforts and attractions offered by the illusively charming objects of this material world, if it diverts the same enthusiasm and infatuation, the same vigour and diligence, the same attachments and indulgences to the supreme universal Truth, the Brahm, then say which shackle or bond of this world is strong and powerful enough from which a man cannot force himself free? [2].

3. This world has its existence because of the 'Chitta' of a man. That is, when a person allows his mind to think of this world and pay attention to it, his memory to store information about it, and his intellect to accept its presence, it is only then that the consciousness registers something called a 'world'. On the contrary, if the mind and intellect is diverted elsewhere, one does not see, feel, hear or smell this world; he does not even speak about this world. For all practical purposes, the world has no existence as far as the man is concerned. This is because it is the mind-intellect complex that actually sees, feels, hears, smells anything and coordinates speech. When that window is closed shut, nothing really matters.

Therefore, everyone should diligently endeavour to clean his Chitta of all deluding impulses. A man who succeeds in diverting and focusing his Chitta, in firmly rooting his intellect, thought, attention and priorities on Brahm, is able to achieve that rare state when one starts identifying oneself with the supreme Brahm. [This is because 'one becomes what one thinks'.] This is an irrefutable, universal and eternal Truth. It is an unequivocal esoteric but truthful fact. [This is because not everyone is aware of the eternal truth and not everyone believes that this world that they see as real is actually a mirage. It is hard to disbelieve one's own eyes, but that is a great paradox—what is seen is false, whereas what is not seen is true! So it becomes difficult to make the mind and intellect to be convinced that the world is false. This is where faith in the scriptures come into the picture, for they are the researched doctrines of wise, scholarly and enlightened sages and seers who had spent an entire lifetime delving deep in to the mysterious of creation and the root causes of all intractable problems faced by mankind. One should benefit from the experience of others, one should firmly belief what the elder spiritual statesmen had declared in the different scriptures. Hence, one realises the fact that the world is a falsehood, and with this conviction one is convinced that it does not exist.] [3].

[Note—Refer Adhyatma Upanishad, Chapter 15, verse no. 26 in this context.]

4. For heretics and non-believers who do not know or do not understand the essential teachings and philosophy of the Vedas do not accept that there is any thing as 'Brihat' or a measureless, vast and all-inclusive entity known as Brahm. In the absence of such erudition and knowledge, one cannot expect to attain that self-illuminated abode of Brahm. [This is because unless one knows precisely about the destination, one has difficulty going there.] Only those who are well versed in the fundamental principles enunciated by the eclectic and sublime Vedas, and are wise and erudite enough to understand their import regarding the truth about Lord Vishnu who is also known as the all-knowing and all-pervading, omniscient and omnipresent supreme Lord called Vasudeo. This understanding or sublime realisation leads him to the honourable and exalted stature which is truly worthy of a learned and wise Brahmin [4].

5. A man who eagerly follows the eclectic teaching of the great Vedas and has firm conviction on the truth of their doctrines and tenets, and who has no worldly aspirations, desires, hopes and expectations, is able to realise and understand the truthful, transcendental, universal, eternal and infinite nature of the supreme Brahm. Such persons become an embodiment or a personification of the truthful Brahm. They automatically acquire such virtuous qualities as being peaceful and serene, as having forbearance, fortitude and tolerance, as being completely contented and fulfilled, as having no attractions for the comforts and pleasures of this material world, and as being truly renunciate, dispassionate, detached, indifferent and disinterested towards this world and its objects. Like those seeking emancipation and salvation, such persons have indeed realised the Supreme Being [5].

6. Such an enlightened and wise person should disassociate himself from all worldly desires, aspirations and hopes. He should fulfill his obligations towards his ancestors and his teachers¹. Having thus completed his moral obligations (which amounts to being free from debts), the wise renunciate who has realised and understood what the supreme Truth and the absolute Reality is, becomes calm, peaceful and serene. He becomes quiet and rested. He should then take up residence in some serene and secluded hermitage. As a final step, he should accept the rigorous life and stern vows of Sanyas (which is the 4th and the last phase of life of a man marked by total and wholesome renunciation and detachment from this world, and spending time on contemplation and meditation upon the pure self, the Atma, as well as Brahm, the Supreme Being). He should accept the five symbols of Sanyas as a final declaration of his intentions. He should endeavour to move ahead steadily, unwaveringly and sincerely on the path of emancipation and salvation [6].

[Note--¹The obligations and duties towards his ancestors is to establish and enhance the good name and fame of the family, to carry forward the family line by marrying and raising a family, and doing religious sacrifices and observing sacraments for the overall good of their spirits and for their eternal peace. The responsibilities to the teacher involve serving him, learning what is taught by the teacher properly so that the teacher does not get a bad name, spreading his good name and fame, giving credit to him whenever possible, paying his dues to him which include respect and honour, and to arrange for his care when he becomes old and infirm.]

7. Henceforth (i.e. after taking Sanyas), as long as he lives, he should always carry a 'Tri-Dand' (an ascetic's staff or scepter made of bamboo with a short handle made up of two other types of wood measuring roughly four fingers width in length; these three pieces of wood stand for three glorious qualities expected of a Sanyasi such as exemplary self restraint and full control of the mind and thought, of speech and word, of body and deeds). He is ordained to also wear the sacred thread, carry the body wrapping one-piece cloth (to cover his body), use the loin cloth to cover his private parts, carry a latticed sling bag to hold emergency necessities of life, and the Pavitri (which is made of Kush grass and is worn as a ring on the finger during purification rites and religious activities; it is dark green in colour, and its Latin name is *Agrostis Linearis*) [7].

[Note—It is to be noted here that these symbols are accepted in the initial stages of Sanyas. As has been pointed out in Yagyavalkya Upanishad, verse no. 7-9 (Chapter 17), when he has risen to a certain level of spiritual maturity and become entitled to be called a Paramhans, at that stage he is expected to discard all external symbols of Sanyas.]

8. The above mentioned five external signs distinguishing a person as a Sanyasi, should be collectively regarded as symbols of the supreme, transcendental Brahm.

Therefore, the mendicant, the reclusive ascetic should never abandon them, never forsake them. He should always carry them under all circumstances (for these signs create a symbolic nearness to Brahm for him and constantly remind him that he has risen above this mundane world and has attained a stature that is equivalent to being one similar to Brahm, to being very close with the almighty Lord of this creation.

After the death of a Sanyasi, these five symbols that he had carried with him while alive should be buried in the earth [8].

[Note—There is no opposition or contradiction in what Yagyavalkya Upanishad, verse nos. 7-9 says regarding abandonment of external signs, and what these present verses say about the need to carry them as a routine practice. It all depends upon the type of Sanyasi he is, i.e. the school of philosophy to which he subscribes, as well as to the level of his spiritual attainment or elevation. If suppose he has reached a very high level of Brahm realisation where he is perpetually engrossed in mediating and contemplating upon Brahm and his pure conscious Atma, he would not even be aware whether or not he is carrying the staff, the pot, the tuft of hair, the sacred thread etc. He would not at all be bothered about them; rather these external signs and other prescribed formalities of religious way of Sanyas such as having a purification bath, offering prayers, observing certain sacraments, going out for begging etc.—all would be like a burdensome nuisance for him. He wouldn't like to be bothered with them, and in such a case the prescription of Yagyavalkya Upanishad would apply.

But in the initial stages of Sanyas and in all other cases where true Brahm realisation has not yet fructified, the instructions as prescribed in the present Upanishad applies. Even as all students who go to college do not become acclaimed scientists or philosophers, all Sanyasis do not reach that exalted and superior state of Brahm realisation when these signs of Sanyas are no longer needed and become redundant because they have already served their purpose. For the rest, certain codes of conduct are necessary just in order to guide them, to maintain discipline and a degree of decorum, and also to ensure a certain level of dignity, respect and honour for them in the society, for the people would recognise a man as a Sanyasi only when they see him wearing these signs as insignia, just like a doctor is recognised in a crowded hospital by his white apron, a priest by his priestly robe and other external signs, and a lawyer by his coat and tie in the congested court premises. It is for such people that these edicts are meant. Further on, this Upanishad itself stresses in verse nos. 12-13 that these formalities are not needed later on as one has progressed further in one's spiritual journey.]

9. A renunciate ascetic who aspires to reach his chosen God Lord Vishnu carries with him signs identifying him as a devotee of the Lord to indicate that he has chosen the path of Sanyas to enable him to attain his Lord. The symbols are both external as well as internal¹. He should never abandon either of them, for in the case he does so then he is deemed to be fallen from his chosen auspicious path and the exalted stature. There is no doubt about it [9].

[Note--¹The external symbols that a reclusive ascetic carries are mentioned in verse no. 7. The internal symbols or signs are the characteristic temperaments, tendencies and outlooks that distinguish a true renunciate from imposters. These internal mental setups and habits are enumerated in verse no. 11-12 and 19 below. One would observe that more than the external symbols it is the internal signs indicated by mental temperaments and inclinations that are inherent to a person and which determine his thought processes that are of paramount importance because the latter keeps him steadfast on his chosen path with faltering and falling prey to temptations.

External symbols can be lost and retrieved, but if one loses his integrity, all is lost for ever. It is also emphasised that the external signs are nevertheless necessary because they create the required background, ambience and motivation for spiritual pursuits with the fear of shame, denunciation and castigation by the society if one falls from the path. This makes him vigilant and alert to uphold the dignity and decorum of Sanyas and do nothing that would put the institution of Sanyas to shame. But it must be remembered that it is his sincere vows to be honest and truthful with himself and loyal to the signs of Sanyas that actually lead him to success. The 'drive and motivation' are represented by the internal symbol, while the external symbols act like a king's royal 'insignia or emblem' that help to distinguish a Sanyasi as an exalted soul.]

10. The Tri-Dand (ascetic's staff or scepter as described in verse no.7) is regarded as a special symbol or an emblem of a Sanyasi (because it is like a king's royal scepter that stands for his powers and authority). This symbol/emblem has the potential to provide liberation and deliverance to the soul of the erudite and wise Brahmin. [Here the word Brahmin refers not only to a particular class of people but all those who have risen above the mundane and humdrum activities of life in this deluding world and have stepped on the path of realisation of Truth. A Sanyasi is deemed to be a Brahmin because he has turned away from pursuing this mirage-like materialistic world, and instead has turned his attention towards self realisation and Brahm realisation.] This Tri-Dand represents the sacrosanct edicts of the Vedas. It is an embodiment of all those virtues which are described by the scriptures as auspicious, righteous, noble and proper. [That is, by holding the staff in his hand, the Sanyasi symbolically declares his intention to uphold all these virtues. As a consequence, he should ensure that all his conducts are above reproach and criticism. He should strive to be an upholder of the truth and a keeper of good conscious, as it were. He should act as a custodian of these virtues and endeavour to live an exemplary life to illustrate by example what is meant by these virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety. He should 'walk the talk of the scriptures'. He sets an example of sacrifices to be made in order to attain an exalted stature of self realisation and self purification.] [10].

11. Parivrajaks or Sanyasis are classified into four types--(1) Kutichak, (2) Bahudak, (3) Hans, and (4) Param Hans. All of them wear a sacred thread, a knot of hair on their tonsured head, and other such signs that a renunciate ascetic/friar/monk/hermit/mendicant who is a devotee of Lord Vishnu is ordained to carry by the scriptures (see verse no.7-9). Their Chitta (the faculty of reasoning and thinking, understanding and remembering, paying attention and concentrating and other such faculties of the mind-intellect complex) is pure of any taints, is free from any corruptions and deluding influences. They worship the supreme, sublime and transcendental Brahm in their Atma or soul; they regard their Atma as a microcosmic image or revelation of Brahm as well as a seat of that Brahm. They adhere to the principle of doing Japa (constant repetition of the divine name of the Lord or holy words associated with him and having ethereal and mystical powers) in a prescribed manner. They diligently follow the rules and regulations pertaining to 'Yam and Niyam' (observing self restraint and control of the sense organs from their natural restlessness and tendency to be lured by the sensual objects of gratification in this world; the cessation of worldly pursuits; following rigorously the tenets and doctrines related to a disciplined way of spiritual life). They have a pleasing temperament and righteous demeanours. They are amicable, affable, civilized and charming in all their interactions with others.

In this connection there is this maxim—‘The four types of Sanyasis—viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hans and Param-Hans—are segregated into these four classes merely because they have certain inherent and subtle Vrittis (temperaments and tendencies) that are very characteristic of them. Besides these, they are otherwise alike in all aspects. All bear the same external as well as the internal signs of a Sanyasi’. [Sanyaso-panishad of the Sam Veda tradition gives a detailed account of the special characteristics referred to here which distinguish them from one another.] [11].

12. They are diligent and steadfast, honest and sincere in doing the so-called ‘Panch-Yagya’ or the symbolic five sacred sacrifices. They are deemed to be experts in them, well versed in them, firmly committed to them¹. All Sanyasis strictly follow the norms of behaviour and codes of righteous conduct laid down for them by the scriptures. They endeavour to accept the company of Brahm by pursuing all relevant paths pertaining to the truthful knowledge about Brahm, and that can take them to their destination. That is, instead of spending, or rather wasting their precious time in pursuing knowledge pertaining to the material world of illusionary but attractive looking objects which would lead them to nowhere, they endeavour to acquire the sublime knowledge about Brahm and take refuge and shelter in that knowledge.

They abandon this tempting and charming world which is like a colourful tree (having so many branches with myriad varieties of multi coloured flowers, fruits and leaves), and instead of it they focus their attention on its root or the fundamental basis, and marvel at the stupendous creative powers of Nature which is beyond description. [That is, they appreciate the majesty and stupendity of the almighty Brahm that he not only created that tree but empowered it with the powers to recreate its self and other variants as a constant process of evolution.] In other words, instead of being laid astray and frittering away precious time in trying to understand and unravel the mysterious of the ultimate Truth of this world by attempting to seek it in the labyrinthine web of this world as well as in voluminous scriptures, they straight away go to the cause of it all---the ‘root’ of the so-called tree which is a metaphor for this world. If they understand the fundamentals, the rest become easy to grasp and follow. This fundamental aspect of the world is ‘Brahm’. It is this Brahm that all the scriptures talk about.

This erudition and wisdom makes them realise the futility of elaborate rituals, religious practices and formality of observing sacraments. With enlightenment, they do not feel the need of doing these formalities and instead concentrate upon enjoying the divine taste of the ‘nectar of truth and reality’. [That is, they act like bees that home in on the flower’s nectar and remain oblivious to the surrounding beauty and enticing fragrances of other flowers in the garden. In fact they remain unbothered about the flower itself except the nectar that it offers to it.]

Such erudite, wise, enlightened and self realised Sanyasi forsakes external deeds (i.e. they need not even do things that are righteous and auspicious and expected to be done as a matter of religious duty; they need not bother about worldly formalities of doing sanctified deeds or observing sacraments). They do not interact with the external world like ordinary mortals do. Instead, their interaction is with the supreme Lord Vishnu; they literally work and play with their Lord instead of working and playing with their worldly companions. They remain engrossed in the thoughts of Lord Vishnu instead of the thoughts of the world. They identify their Atma or soul and their true being with Lord Vishnu and treat it as an embodiment of Vishnu. Their

heart is an abode of Vishnu; they worship the Lord, adore him, honour him, revere him, and only him and no one else².

This commitment and singularity of purpose paves the way for their 'Mukti' or liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle a creature to this entrapping and deluding world of transmigration (i.e. they find emancipation and salvation for their soul and do not take birth again in this world). [12].

[Note--(1) ¹The five deemed sacred sacrifices are--(a) doing *Japa* which is repeating/chanting/reciting of the divine Mantra called the Gayatri Mantra which is especially prescribed for renunciate ascetics (see verse no. 14 below), (b) doing *Yoga* or meditation and contemplation upon divinity, (c) doing *Tapa* or observing austerities, doing penances, suffering hardships for spiritual enhancement, having noble thoughts and following virtuous path inspite of all the hurdles and inconveniences, (d) doing *Swadhyaya* or self study which entails the deep study of the scriptures and contemplating upon their teachings as well as meditating upon the Atma which is pure consciousness and the pure self, and (e) endeavouring to acquire *Gyan* which is the truthful knowledge about the ultimate Truth and Reality in the creation, a knowledge that would help to dispel the dark veil of ignorance and delusions that surrounds the creature from all the sides, almost suffocating and pinning him down.

(2) ²This Upanishad treats Lord Vishnu as the patron deity of Sanyasis. The supreme Brahman and Lord Vishnu are synonymously treated. In other Upanishads dealing with Sanyas, the divine ethereal word OM is used for worship instead of the names of Vishnu. Basically there is no difference between them because the ultimate almighty Authority in the creation is known as 'Brahman' and the latter is also an imaginary name for that Authority which in essence has no names, designations, attributes and forms. Vishnu and OM are two of the numerous names of the Supreme Being. The name of Vishnu here only indicates that this particular Upanishad is meant for the followers of Lord Vishnu who wish to take to Sanyas. Such adherents are called 'Vaishnavs'. Refer also to Yagyavalkya Upanishad, Chapter 17 of this volume.]

13. Until the time of death, a Sanyasi should observe certain sacraments especially prescribed for this ascetic's way of life. He should do 'Sandhya',¹ i.e. he should offer prayers to the supreme Lord three times a day—at dawn, at noon and at dusk. He should bathe daily, offer libation to his dead ancestors and oblation to the Gods. He should keep himself clean by doing the purification rites daily. Worship should be offered to the chosen deity (in this case, Lord Vishnu) while standing in reverence and respect for him. And finally, he should complete the so-called 5-Yagyas or sacred religious obligations towards the Gods, the dead ancestors, the guests of honour, all the creatures at large, and the supreme Brahman [13].

[Note---¹The *Sandhya* prayers offered three times a day are offered to the Sun God and the hymns used for the purpose is the Gayatri Mantra. See Jabalo-panishad, section 2, verse no.2, and Trishiki Brahmano-panishad, verse no. 109 in this context. This verse should be compared with verse no. 12 in which the Sanyasi is ordained to forsake all worldly deeds as well as formal rites and rituals. There is no contradiction in these verses. This present verse no. 13 outlines the bare fundamental codes of daily conduct of a routine life that a Sanyasi should adhere to—such as offering prayers, taking a bath, making oblations or offering libations. These are not the activities relating to the gross material world, for doing no deeds and observing no rituals does not mean a blanket sanction to remain idle and become lazy enough to not even offer worship to the supreme Lord, the Brahman; it does not mean also to remain dirty and not taking a bath in the name of 'not doing any worldly deed'. That interpretation is highly ridiculous. After all a Sanyasi is supposed to set an example of righteous and

auspicious conduct to be emulated by others in the society who look up to him for guidance and treat him with utmost respect and honour. His not worshipping, not taking a bath, not observing sacraments, not doing the symbolic Yagyās described above, and not following proper rules of conduct would set a bad example and demean the high stature of the institution of Sanyas. The intention of verse no. 12 is to emphasise the fact that a true Sanyasi is not bound by any rigid set of sacrosanct laws and regulations, for they are intended to guide those who are not too well versed in what is to be done and what not to be done; they are not meant for those who are already enlightened and beyond reproach. They need not follow a set pattern of ritualistic way of life if they so wish, but it is expected of them that they do follow certain basic guidelines which only go to help them in their spiritual quest instead of acting as compulsory and inviolable laws which must be rigidly adhered to under any condition. A Sanyasi is expected to follow them voluntarily and freely.]

14. The Gayatri Mantra having four stanzas or steps¹ (called a Anushtup Chand) should be invoked and recited while doing the sacramental fire sacrifice three times a day—at dawn, at noon and at dusk. The divine, ethereal and eclectic word for Brahm or Pranav, which is OM, is invoked ten times² so as to punctuate each word of the Mantra while reciting it, along with the seven ‘Vyahritis’³. The (Gayatri) Mantra has four ‘steps’ and a ‘head’⁴, and it should be ensured that the entire ‘body’ is invoked for the prayer. [That is, the full Mantra should be recited from the beginning till the end without any disruption.] [14].

[Note--- ¹The holy and famous *Gayatri Mantra* is a hymn in honour of Brahm composed in the typical style of a ‘Anustup Chanda’. That Mantra is the following:-- ‘OM BHURBHUVAHA SVAHA¹, TATSAVIURVARENYAM², BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAH³, DHIYO YO NAH PRACODAYAT⁴’. It means ‘OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial, the celestial and heavenly worlds. That Brahm is luminous like the Sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble path’. The four phrases of the Anushtup Chanda are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).

² Another meaning of saying that OM should be repeated ten times is that the whole Mantra should be repeated ten times during one prayer sitting because OM is at the beginning and it has already stated that there should be no break in recitation. .

³ The seven *Vyahritis* are the words—(1) Bhu, (2) Bhuvaha, (3) Swaha, (4) Maha, (5) Janaha, (6) Tapaha, and (7) Satyam. ‘Vyahriti’ means the root word uttered by the creator at the time of creation which formed the nucleus around which the seven worlds formed. ‘Bhu’ was the nucleus for earth, ‘Bhuvaha’ for the sky above the earth, ‘Swaha’ for the space beyond the earth’s atmosphere and is generally meant for the heavens, ‘Maha’ stands for the greater heavens beyond the solar system, called the Maha-Loka where enlightened sages and seers are supposed to dwell (as opposed to earth where ordinary creatures including subterranean creatures would finally take up residence), ‘Tapaha’ was the place where exalted ascetics would do penances and austerities, and ‘Satyam’ was the truthful and ultimate abode where the ultimate and irrefutable supreme truthful entity which is the only Authority in creation resides.

The seven *Vyahritis* are also called the seven *Subtle Worlds*--- According to Sankhya Shastra and the Purans, Brahma, who is known as ‘Swayambhu’ (self created in the sense that he had no father or ancestor) created seven elements called ‘Vyahriti’, viz. Bhuh, Buhvaha, Swaha,

Mahaha, Janaha, Tapaha and Satyam respectively (भूः, भुवः, स्वः, महः, जनः, तपः, सत्यमः) which constitute the fundamental elements which formed the gross body of the creation as its core building blocks at the macro level. Encircling this core is the rounded globe called 'earth' which is surrounded by concentric circles constituting of 'water' (जल), 'energy' called 'Tej' (तेज), 'wind or air' (वायु), 'sky or space' (आकाश), the notions that are described as 'pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness and vanity' collectively called 'Ahankar' (अहंकार), and the notions of 'importance, majesty, grandeur, magnificence and lordliness' called collectively as 'Mahattatva' (महत्तत्त्व). Each of them was ten times larger than its preceding layer or circle.

⁴ The Gayatri Mantra of *four steps* is based on a particular style of poetic composition called the 'Anushtup Chand'. The *head* of this Mantra is the divine word OM with which it starts, while the rest of the Mantra constitutes the body. The reference to the head, the leg and a body implies that the Mantra is a living personification of divinity; it embodies Brahm because of the use of the word OM as well as the deity who is being praised and honoured. Its invocation and worship is equivalent to invoking the stupendous powers of Brahm himself, and its worship is paying homage to the Supreme Being directly.]

15. One should be diligent and steadfast in, focused on, and devoted to doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation)¹ as well as performance of Yagya (religious sacrifices such as fire sacrifice)², and simultaneously serving one's Guru (teacher and moral preceptor; one who removes darkness of ignorance) and the Lord known as Hari (one of the names of Vishnu).

One should be unwavering in following the prime tenet of 'non-violence' or 'Ahinsa'³ by his Mana (mind and heart; thought and emotions), by his speech and words, by his body, by his actions and deeds. Stern allegiance to the principles of non-violence is equivalent to doing a great Tapa (because it involves a lot of sufferance, fortitude, boldness, strength of character and courage; it needs a lot of forgiveness, forbearance, tolerance, personal sacrifices, compassion, equanimity, mercy and resilience to be able to successfully implement it). This virtue has been honoured as being equivalent to the sacred sacrifice called 'Yagya' (because all religious sacrifices require the chief patron to observe a set of stern vows during the period of the sacrifice, with the difference here being that this vow of non-violence has no time frame and it is a life long commitment, making its successful implementation all the more difficult) [15].

[Note--¹The word *Yoga* has a broad ramification. Besides its conventional meaning of contemplation and meditation, it also implies the various paths of spiritual enhancement of the aspirant. There are two broad views on the subject. According to one, Yoga involves four spiritual paths--(1) 'Bhakti' meaning devotion and faith on a chosen deity who represents the ideals of the follower; (2) 'Gyan' which is the use of the mind and intellect to reach the ultimate, irrefutable truth; (3) 'Karma' which implies doing righteous deeds and taking appropriate actions as a means of spiritual progress; and (4) 'Raj' which is the psycho spiritual practice of exercises and breath control. According to Patanjali who is considered to be the greatest exponent of Yoga, the latter consists of 8-fold path. These are briefly the following--(1) 'Yam' or self restraint; (2) 'Niyam' or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) 'Asana' or postures for meditation; (4) 'Pranayam' or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) 'Pratyahar' or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) 'Dhaarna' or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) 'Dhyan' or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; and (8) 'Samadhi' or a state in which the

aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation.

² The word *Yagya* broadly refers to a fire sacrifice; but again it has a wide meaning. It incorporates in its ambit all activities that are done with a selfless motive with a religious zeal for the betterment of the self as well as of the society at large. With this broad meaning, even selfless teaching is a symbolic *Yagya* if the intention is not ulterior and it is done to remove the bane of ignorance and make others empowered with knowledge that would set them free. Therefore, 'non-violence' is also an auspicious *Yagya* as postulated in this verse because it involves the welfare of others and a lot of personal sacrifice and effort.

³ This verse has a clear resonance in the principal teachings of other major religions, such as Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity as all of them lay the greatest of emphasis on this virtue of non-violence. It not only means not killing anyone but also includes not harming or causing any injury in any manner whatsoever. This implies not to harm anyone by saying anything that hurts his emotions and reputation directly or indirectly; not doing anything or taking any action that causes any pain or misery to others; to plan, think, listen to and even talk about anything that might inspire or cause to be inspired any kind of agony to another creature. This is truthful non-violence. It will be appreciated how tough it is to observe any single vow for a lifetime, and this particular vow entails a lot of personal sacrifices and sufferings.]

16. Diligent, regular and thorough study of and deep pondering over the subtle and sublime meanings and implications of the teachings of all the Upanishads is called 'Swadhyaya Yagya'. It involves a continuous and regular self study of the scriptures with the same fervour and devotion that is shown to a fire sacrifice, with due attention for details and their correct meaning. That is, the study of scriptures is no less important than doing a fire sacrifice; it is rather equivalent to it. The divine, holy and ethereal word OM is to be recited or pronounced while one symbolically offers one's Pran (the pure 'self' represented by the vital spark of life in a creature) as an oblation/offering to the sacred fire representing the supreme transcendental Brahman. This symbolically implies total surrender to Brahman and sincerity in offering one's self to (the service of) the almighty Authority which is the only and the ultimate Truth and Reality in this creation as well as the only Lord in this world. One should endeavour to make one's Atma (or soul, the pure self and pure consciousness) inseparable and indistinguishable from one's Lord, the supreme Brahman (and consequentially feel elated and exhilarated that such a humble being as the self has acquired the privilege of being so close to that Supreme Being and being identified with him, having the same glory and authority as the Supreme Being. This implies that the aspirant rises above the mundane and becomes as compassionate and magnanimous as the Lord!). [16].

17. 'Gyan Yagya', or diligent, focused and steady pursuance of truthful knowledge of the absolute and irrefutable Truth and Reality, is akin to a sacred religious sacrifice. In fact, it is the best form of sacrifice (because the main objective of any fire sacrifice is spiritual welfare of the self and the society at large, and acquisition of truthful knowledge not only removes ignorance, a major cause of delusions that trap the soul of the creature in the endless cycle of worldly desires and their attendant sorrows, sufferings and miseries, but also empowers him with the insight which he can use to show the correct path to others who are less fortunate; knowledge is empowerment).

The Gyan or truthful and incisive knowledge about the reality that is possessed by an honest and sincere Sanyasi (renunciate ascetic; a friar; a mendicant, a reclusive monk) is represented symbolically by his 'Danda', i.e. it is his scepter or his staff; it is

his 'Shikha', i.e. it is his mandatory knot of hair on his tonsured head; and it is his 'Yagyopavit', i.e. it is his sacred thread¹. [17].

[Note--¹That is, *Gyan* or the truthful knowledge of the reality that can dispel all types of delusions and ignorance has the same importance and significance for a Sanyasi as his three sacred symbols---the staff, the hair and the sacred thread. Even as these external symbols mark a Sanyasi and distinguishes him from the rest in the society, entitling him to instant recognition, reverence, respect, honour and praise, acquisition of knowledge too bestows him a distinguished place amongst his peers. Truthful knowledge will always stand him in good stead and protect him from going astray from his chosen spiritual path much like these three visible signs which are also basically intended to guard him and constantly remind him of his exalted stature so that he is always alert and vigilant. Knowledge always helps him to decide for himself what he should do and what he should avoid.

The three external signs are worldly and gross in comparison to knowledge which is eternal and liberating for the soul. This verse emphasises that since the aim of taking to the difficult path of Sanyas is liberation and deliverance of the soul, it is of prime importance that one pays attention to acquisition of *Gyan*. As is obvious, external signs will perish with time, but knowledge is imperishable. Besides this, Sanyasi's knowledge will benefit others; it will also inculcate humility in him and lend a spiritual aura about him that would act like the light of the Sun or the Moon for the others. Instead, if he has no *Gyan*, mere carrying a staff, sporting the tuft of hair and wearing the thread would more likely make him proud and haughty of the fact that he is a superior person who gets respect as a matter of right, something abhorable for a renunciate person.]

18. A person who becomes so wise, erudite and enlightened so as to treat the knot of hair on his head, called a Shikha, as well as the sacred thread, called the Yagyopavit, worn by him as symbols of the supreme, transcendental Brahman, all things used by him or belonging to him become holy symbols of Brahman. This is the proclamation and assertion of the canons of the Vedas; this is their considered view, their discipline, their command, their advice, and their direction and instruction. This is the spiritual discipline they teach [18].

19. Oh dear gentlemen! [I have described to you what steps a person should take to get himself formally initiated into the order of 'Parivrajaks' (renunciate ascetic, friars, monks or mendicants). Now I shall enumerate their characteristic glorious virtues and basic temperaments that are inherent in their nature, and the disciplines and regimen they are expected to follow religiously and diligently with firm faith, conviction and sincerity. These Parivrajaks (Sanyasis) have overcome such negative traits as 'Kaam' (broadly meaning worldly passions, lust, desires and longing for sensual gratification), 'Krodh' (anger, wrathfulness, cursing and vehemence), 'Lobh' (greed, avarice, rapacity, longing for material gain), 'Moha' (worldly attractions, infatuations, delusions and ignorance), 'Dambha' (vanity, hypocrisy, deceit, conceit, pretensions and falsehoods), 'Darpa' (false pride, ego, arrogance, superiority complex and haughtiness), 'Asuya' (criticizing and finding faults with others, denouncing them and pricking holes in other people's character and deeds), 'Mamta' (having love and longing for someone or something; to be infatuated, to have undue endearment), 'Ahankar' (ego, pride, arrogance, vanity, haughtiness and hypocrisy) etc.

They remain unmoving, unruffled and unaffected by either being shown respect, honour and praise, or being treated with disdain, insult and contempt. That is, they have exemplary equanimity, fortitude, forbearance and tolerance as their hallmark. They remain steady, firm and unwavering like a tree in the face of either

praise or criticism; they treat praise and rebuke equally, with stoic calm and equanimity.

They do not speak (i.e. do not curse, show no anger, are not vindictive, seek no retribution, punishment or revenge) inspite of being harmed or tormented in any manner by others (exactly the way Jesus Christ remained calm and forgiving when falsely implicated before being crucified).

This is how those who are adroit, wise, erudite and enlightened find the nectar-like elixir of bliss and eternity, called Amrit*, which leads the soul to liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle it to this fearful world while they are still alive in it. [This is called 'Jivan Mukti'¹, or being free from the bondages of this world while living a normal life, but with a difference that this world has no relevance for such exalted souls; for all practical purposes the world ceases to exist for them.]

In this context, there is a sacred dictum of the Vedas--'After having done one's duty of taking due care of one's brothers, sons etc. (i.e. the family) according to the best of one's ability, one should not look back at them (i.e. one should not worry unnecessarily for them; one should not expect anything from them; one should not expect any reciprocal service and duty bound action from them to take care of their benefactor and mentor). It should be a case of 'do your duty and forget'. In stead, once a person takes to Sanyas (i.e. once he becomes a friar or an ascetic), he should snap all ties with them and go out in the Eastern or Northern direction as a wandering mendicant. He should be constantly on the move, all the while meditating and contemplating upon the pure consciousness 'self' or the Atma. That is, he should stop getting sucked in the vortex of delusions and seek the Truth about the Atma which is pure consciousness, as opposed to wasting his time on pursuing falsehoods.

[The Sanyasi is advised to go far away from his native place so as to ensure that he completely breaks all his ties with it. If he remains nearby, there are good chances of his peace being disturbed, and his renunciation and indifference being undermined by visits of his near and dear ones and their pleadings and narration of woes to him, of his remembering his past life and feeling a sense of re-attachment with the world he has left behind, etc. Being a human being after all, he is bound to be perturbed and feel mentally disturbed; he would be constantly buffeted and tossed emotionally by his past. It is better therefore to put his past life completely behind him and move ahead with his new life as a Sanyasi. So when he goes far away, by and by he would forget everything of his past. His 'umbilical cord' with his past world, which he had so assiduously built and nurtured from scratch, would be snapped for good. He would feel humble like the ordinary man next to him because he would forget that sometime back he was, say, a rich man or someone who occupied a high position in the society. He will feel free like a de-caged bird.

There is another significant point here—the fact that he is advised to go in the East and North direction. Why? It is because the Far East is the land of the rising sun, which is a metaphor for spiritual elevation and enhancement of one's mental and intellectual reach. It is a place of origin of many ancient religions, many schools of eclectic thoughts and philosophies, an ancient land of enlightenment and wisdom, a land of philosophers and mystics. While moving east, the Sanyasi would see the rising sun everyday before him and its movement higher and higher into the sky till it reaches its zenith during noon, as opposed to the west direction where the rising sun would be at his back, and with the passing of each hour the sun would be sinking further and further, all the while losing a bit of its splendour and dazzle till it finally vanishes in the realm of darkness of the night. The rising sun of the east would remind him of the rising in him of spirituality and divinity on a regular basis. On the contrary,

if he had gone west he would be seeing the setting sun daily, symbolising the setting of these eclectic values and their giving way to darkness of the night representing the negative qualities of delusions, ignorance and spiritual decadence.

Similarly, the North direction is a metaphor for upliftment, enhancement and getting up, for rising and moving ahead to reach for something that is higher and better. It is the opposite of falling down and sinking into moral degradation and spiritual demotion, which would be the case if he was advised to move to the South. The south direction is a metaphor for demotion, degradation, degeneration, decadence, and spiritual fall of the aspirant. Besides this, from the perspective of geography also, the land mass of India has vast stretches of the ocean in the south, and it is practically impossible to move far in that direction. Instead, it is more practical and prudent to move to the rejuvenating, serene, tranquil and picturesque environment of the lush green verdant forests, vibrant wild life, blooming flowers, gurgling rivers and enchanting valleys of the lofty mountains in the Himalayan range located in the North to find a place that is conducive to spiritual pursuits, a place that could give peace, succour and solace to the soul of the tormented man in the final days of his life after he has spent his entire lifetime in tiring worldly pursuit.

Hence it is a practical advice given by the Upanishad to move either to the East or the North, instead of to the West and the South.] [19].

[Note--¹There are basically two types of *Muktis*—(1) Jivan Mukti, and (2) Videh Mukti. The word ‘Amrit’* appearing in the text refers to the eternal elixir of beatitude and felicity that a creature strives to obtain. A person who has attained Jivan Mukti--which implies that he has obtained liberation from the fetters that shackles a creature to the body and the external world and has found deliverance from its horrible torments (Mukti) even while it is alive and has a body (Jivan)—is deemed to have tasted that elixir (Amrit). He physically lives in this world but remains oblivious of it.

The concept of *Jivan Mukti* and *Videha Mukti* can be briefly described as follows:---The word ‘Jivan Mukta’ means that such persons will become emancipated even though they are still living in this world. They would become enlightened, wise and realised, and Maya or delusion and ignorance would no more have any effect on them. The concept of ‘Jivan Mukta’ has been described by other scriptures in the following way— (a) According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 4/4/7, ‘यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः । अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥’, ‘When all the desires present in one’s heart are eliminated, then such a mortal being becomes immortal and attains Brahman in this body itself why he is still alive’; (b) According to Vivek Chudamani, 543, ‘निर्धनोऽपि सदा तुष्टोऽप्यसहायो महाबलः । नित्यतृप्तोऽप्यभुञ्जानोऽप्यसमः समदर्शनः ॥’, ‘A Jivan Mukta person is one who remains ever contented though he has no riches; he is very strong, potent and powerful though helpless and without support; he is perpetually satisfied though he does not enjoy the sense objects of comfort in this world; he treats everyone equally though he is without an exemplar’; (c) According to Vivek Chudamani, 544, ‘अपि कुर्वन्नकुर्वाणश्चाभोक्ता फलभोग्यपि । शरीर्यप्यशरीर्येष परिच्छिन्नोऽपि सर्वगः ॥’, ‘A Jivan Mukta person is he who remains inactive (uninvolved) though doing everything; he remains untouched by the fruits of past actions though witnessing and experiencing them (i.e. he remains unaffected and unruffled); he does not identify himself with his body though he possess one’; (d) According to Laghu (minor) Yog Vashistha, 5/93 ‘रागद्वेषभयादीनामनुरूपं चरन्नपि । योऽन्तर्व्योमवदत्यच्छः स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते ॥’, ‘He is called a Jivan Mukta who, though buffeted by such emotions as love, hate, fear and the like, remains unaffected and pure and spotless in his heart as the sky’.

Therefore, ‘Jivan Mukti’ means freedom from being mentally engrossed in this deluding and artificial world and becoming free from the shackles that tie a person to

the cycle of transmigration in this world while he still physically lives in it and carries out his assigned and designated duties and works with dispassion and detachment.

The stimuli or impulses originating in the artificial external world that create emotions of likeness or un-likeness, love or hatred, dearness or aversions, are all received by the five sense organs of perception of the gross body (such as eyes, nose, ears, tongue and skin). They are analysed and sorted out in the subtle body by the mind and intellect. The Atma is given the final brief or gist by its assistant in the form of the intellect on these various stimuli, impulses or information received in the form of the various perceptions of the external world as gathered by the sense organs. Bereft of this physical gross body having these sense organs—which act as the radar for the supreme boss which is the Atma sitting in the control room represented by causal body and using the mind-intellect complex of the subtle body as the instrument panel to receive all the information about the external world and ordering the body to act accordingly—there will be no reception of stimuli, and hence the Atma will be free of being deluded by such stimuli, and as a result, it will have no emotions or agitations caused by such stimuli. The Atma, therefore, will remain blissful, peaceful, tranquil and happy in its secluded, serene and sanitised environs. It is like disconnecting the boss from the external world by dismantling the link between his control room and the external world perceived through by the array of the radars present in the form of the sense organs of the body. Once the radar is cut off, all receptions cease, and the control panel goes blank. The Atma will be peaceful and blissful because it will not be agitated by constant bombardment by useless and annoying stimuli and impulses from the external world.

Further, since the Atma, as an independent, individual entity, does not have its own physical body (remember, the creature's body is merely the 'habitat' of the Atma; it is not its 'own' body in the sense that the Atma does not have any ownership right over the body, which is only a temporary residence for it much like a hotel or inn), it naturally follows that it wouldn't have the various organs of perception and action which the physical gross body of the creature has. Therefore, in the absence of the physical body of its own, the Atma will have no chance or scope of being able to be disturbed by the different stimuli from the external world directly. It gets disturbed though indirectly through the sense organs of the gross body of the creature receiving stimuli from the external world. In brief the Atma is an independent resident of the gross body of the creature, and had it not been for the external sense organs of the body, the Atma would have lived perpetually in complete bliss in its causal body where it resides.

Air is present everywhere, but it is neither visible nor felt unless it blows as a soft breeze when it is felt by its touch on the skin. So, in this case, the soul of a person who has become 'Videha Mukta' is compared to this all-pervading but invisible wind or air which is the mainstay of life in the form of breath or 'Pran'. Consequentially, when a person dies, the breath easily moves out of the body without any trouble. Air as breath or Pran is not a dead entity but very much alive and active like the Atma or soul of the creature. Both the Pran and the Atma, as breath and consciousness respectively, are equally important to maintain life inside the body. They are like two sides of the same coin. When a person is freed from his body upon death, his Atma is liberated from the boundaries that are imposed upon it by the body. The Atma sets itself free and merges with the vast cosmos which is present outside the body even as the 'Pran' or breath present inside the body is liberated from it when it is exhaled and merges with the air present outside the body. This is tantamount to attaining complete liberation without any kind of restrictions that are normally imposed by the body on the Atma of the creature.

Since the true identity of the creature is not his body but the Atma, in the case of 'Videha Mukti', this Atma or soul exits from the trapping of the body much like the breath going out from inside the body and finding liberation in the outside air. Since the body has died, it will not breathe, and therefore the breath need not re-enter it

again. The air (breath) called 'Pran' has found permanent liberation. Even as the air does not perish after it leaves the body, the Atma which is the true identity of the creature also does not perish once it leaves the body and is set free.

The word 'Videha' means 'without a body' while the word 'Mukti' means 'liberation and freedom, emancipation and salvation'. So loosely, the phrase 'Videha Mukti' means 'freedom from the encumbrance and limitations of the body'. This 'Videha Mukti', generally speaking, is possible when the individual Atma, which is the truthful identity of the creature, leaves the body to merge with the cosmic Atma present outside the body of the individual creature. The example of the breath leaving the body is the best way to explain the concept. While the breath is inside the body, it represents the Atma of the individual because it is surrounded by the physical, gross body, but as soon as it is exhaled it becomes synonymous with being provided with 'Videha Mukti' because it finds freedom from the encumbrances and limitations of the body and merges with the wind present in the vast space outside the body. So if a wise creature becomes totally unaware of his body so much so that he does not even feel the pain of a pin pricking it, when he is totally oblivious of the fact that the body even exists, then in that state of existence he is equivalent to having actually lost the body altogether—that is, the creature has obtained 'Videha Mukti'. This state is usually achieved during meditation by Yogis when they enter 'Samadhi' which is a trance-like state of consciousness.

In Maho-panishad, canto 2, verse nos. 38-64 of the Sam Veda tradition (an English version has been published separately), king Janak emphasised to sage Sukhdeo that after inculcating all the virtues as enumerated therein, a person not only becomes 'Jivan Mukta', or freed from the burdens cast by this mundane world, but also attains 'Videha Mukti', or is freed from the encumbrances and limitations caused by the body at the same time. These two types of liberation and deliverance go hand in hand; they complement each other. The best example of a person having both these forms of Mukti simultaneously is king Janak himself because although he is a king taking care of the mundane work of the kingdom, internally he is completely detached from the world and is considered the most enlightened and wise king that ever existed. That is why he is also called 'Videha'. The concept has also been explained in detail by Sri Ram to Hanuman in canto 1 of Muktikopanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition which is chapter 19 of this anthology. Similarly, Adhyatmo-panishad, also of this Vedic tradition, deals with different aspects of Jivan Mukti, especially in its verses 44-47 dedicated to this concept; it is chapter no. 15 of this anthology.]

20. Carrying a water pot and holding an ascetic's staff, remaining focused on the two aspects of the pure Truth, viz. the Atma and the Brahm, and endeavouring to establish a union, or Yoga, between the two by developing and cultivating the inner sight of the mind by meditation, contemplation and deep pondering, wearing a tuft of hair or a knot, called the Shikha, on the tonsured head and the sacred thread, called a Yagyopavit, on his body which he regards as his only companion, kith and kin, a renunciate Sanyasi (monk/mendicant/ascetic/friar) should either beg for food by requesting people for it, or accept whatever is given to him by providence without his actually seeking it through begging. The food should just be sufficient enough to sustain his body to help the Pran (life in the form of his Atma, the pure conscious self) to complete its journey in this mortal world, using the body as a vehicle. He should always be on the move subsisting on food got as described here [20].

21. He should accept any kind of humble pot that is easily available—whether it be made of mud or clay (e.g. an earthen vessel), of wood or hollowed out pumpkin, or made of willow, wicker or folded leaves. For the purpose of a seat to sit upon or as a

covering for the body, he should rely on bark of trees, dry grass, deer skin/hide of an antelope or dried leaves which have already been spoilt by insects. [The bark of tree, grass and leaves are beaten and padded together to form a coarse sitting mat or an over garment. Usually, the dried deer skin/antelope hide is spread on heaped grass and dried leaves upon which the Sanyasi rests. This deer skin is also used to cover the body. If that is not available, a Sanyasi should opt for large leaves to sit upon and cover his private parts. Or else, padded bark of tree or even dried up leaves stuffed in some old cloth bag which is then beaten to form a coarse blanket can be contrived to serve the dual purpose of a seat and a garment.] [21].

22. At the time of change of seasons (for example, when summer ends and the rains start, then when the rains stop and fall arrives, then when winter comes, and when winter concludes and spring sets in etc.), the Sanyasi should get his head shaved but ensure that ‘Shikha’ or the tuft of hair on his head remains intact. During the four seasons when the ‘Viraat Purush’ or Lord Narayan or Vishnu, who embodies the whole universe in his being as the macrocosmic, all encompassing form of creation, is resting or sleeping¹, the Sanyasi should spend those months at one place with a peaceful mind and calmness of demeanours. He should allow peace to prevail so that the Lord of the world can rest or sleep undisturbed in his inner self, i.e. in his heart, as his Atma² [22].

[Note—¹This 4-month period is called ‘Chaturmaas’ during which a Sanyasi is supposed to stop his wanderings and stay at some secluded place outside the village. Usually, for itinerant monks, it is the rainy season. It was a practical measure devised by ancient sages because during these four months there is heavy rainfall and its attendant inclement weather. It would be very inconvenient and impractical for an old man to move around unprotected during such bad weather, for he might fall gravely sick with no one to look after him. Further, a break from constant wanderings is necessary to give the body necessary rest and time to recuperate and rejuvenate. So we see that ancient scriptures were very wise and practical in their prescriptions, though practical aspects were cloaked in the language of religious duties and codes of conduct.

²Since the *heart* of the Sanyasi is an abode of the Lord who resides in it as his Atma or soul, since the Sanyasi is an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu as already indicated in verse no. 9 and 10 by the use of the words ‘Vaishnav Ling’ or having the sacred symbols of Lord Vishnu enshrined in his heart and represented by the external marks on his body, and since Vishnu is the Viraat Purush according to the Purans, the Sanyasi should visualise that his patron God be not disturbed while he is resting in his heart. This is how a true devotee always thinks; he treats his subject of affection with great care, almost with kid’s gloves, as it were. So he remains absolutely calm and composed, both externally as well as internally. In practical terms, this is a device envisioned by ancient sages to give the wandering mendicant a period of some physical rest so that he can recuperate and feel rejuvenated. See also verse no. 23.]

23. Whether he stays at one place or wanders about, a Sanyasi seeking emancipation and salvation should not pursue or get himself involved in any worldly activity other than that prescribed for him (as described in verse no. 12-20 above). For his temporary residence, he should select a secluded place under the shadow of a tree in or near a temple, or in a cave. There, he should stay alone as a lonely recluse without any company, and as far as possible make himself anonymous, inconspicuous and unavailable for others. [That is, he should avoid contact with people and any kind of interaction with them.] He should be calm and peaceful; he should virtually be like the invisible ‘fire’ that is omnipresent everywhere but normally remains invisible,

dormant, latent and imperceptible without its ignition with the help of the firewood¹. He should never feel annoyed or frayed, agitated or perturbed in any manner at the sight of anyone because he should rise above the mundane and narrow mindedness, and treat everyone alike as being an image of the same Atma or soul that has revealed itself in so many myriad forms² [23].

[Note--¹The *fire* element is present everywhere, even in the firewood, but it remains dormant and latent and hidden from view unless ignited when it jumps into view with all its majestic brilliance and splendour. Similarly, a renunciate friar is expected to live an anonymous life but make his presence felt only when deemed necessary, such as for begging for food or when someone seeks his spiritual guidance. This pensive and reclusive life prevents him from getting unnecessarily disturbed and perturbed mentally by the constant buffeting that the mind is subjected to from the various perceptions and stimuli that have their origin in this entrapping, external world. This withdrawal into one's own self helps the Sanyasi to live a peaceful life free from agitations and restlessness, a life that is conducive to contemplation and meditation which is a matter of top priority for him.

²Since a realised and enlightened Sanyasi is expected to treat everyone alike—whether he is a friend or a foe, whether that person had been causing him insult or embarrassment, or had been a cause of his torments and agonies in any way whatsoever, a Sanyasi should remain stoic and calm at his sight. This would be like a fire-test of his sense of equanimity, dispassion and indifference, of his enlightened views that all are alike and Brahm personified. The practical spin-off is that his tormentor or opponent would be ashamed of himself and would, in due course of time, relent and feel guilty. Why? It is because we must not forget that no matter how wicked and evil the man is, how pervert and sinful he might be, but once in a while his inner voice, his conscious pricks him. If the Sanyasi remains calm and forgiving and does not retort, if he shows love and compassion instead, the sinful and wicked man is bound to feel the prick of his own conscious turning hostile against his own self and bite him ferociously like the sting of a scorpion. He is bound to relent and repent. On the contrary, if the Sanyasi retaliates, then not only would he lose his own poise and calm but give the other man a chance to find an excuse to torment him further; he would jack up his affront and tease the Sanyasi more.

After all, there is an old adage which says that it takes two hands to clap—if the Sanyasi shows no interest and complete indifference towards the world, the world would sooner or later leave him to himself.]

24. In the instance when a man realises that his Atma or soul is his true identity or true self, and that it is pure consciousness, then say, what is the purpose of his either taking so much care of his body or even neglecting it; what can he ever expect, hope or desire to have or do? That is, with the dawn of enlightenment, this gross and perishable body which is nevertheless separate and distinct from the Sanyasi's true 'self', his Atma, loses all relevance and importance. It is not only relegated to the background, but virtually and literally dumped for good by him. He stops taking any interest in his body [24].

25. An erudite and wise Brahmin who is steady and persistent in his spiritual pursuit of seeking that which is the ultimate Truth and absolute Reality, i.e. Brahm who is imperishable, eternal and infinite, should fix his attention unwaveringly on that Truth and Reality once that enlightenment dawns upon him. He should establish his intellect and mind firmly on that ultimate, supreme and transcendental Truth (Brahm).

One should not allow oneself to be trapped in a quagmire of words because they are like a trap and a misuse of the faculty of speech. [That is, a Sanyasi should guard against indulgence in debates, discussions, gossiping and chattering as well as

attending lectures or giving them himself or answering queries, because they are all a cause of vexation for the spirit. The supreme Truth is so indefinable, incomprehensible and irrefutable that it cannot be explained and defined by words; its profundity and endless vastness cannot be canned and encrypted in words, and neither can it be ascertained or deduced by debates and discussions. That is why it is ordained that he observes silence.] [25].

26. He should be unattached to anything just like a child¹. A Sanyasi should remain firm in his renunciation, detachment, dispassion and indifference towards the external world. 'There is nothing besides Brahm'—this should be his firm conviction, faith and belief; he should be firmly grouted in this truth. He should realise the truth of Brahm like an enlightened, wise, learned and scholarly adult, while like a child he should remain indifferent and detached from this materialistic world. Consequentially, he should enjoy the company of his Atma or his pure consciousness and see it everywhere. Therefore, he never feels alone, because the Atma is always there to give him company. That is, once he has realised the truth about the ubiquitous and supreme Atma, he should forsake all that is non-Atma, i.e. the deluding and misleading artificial world. Once illusions are dispelled, the Truth prevails; he sees the Atma in the other person as much as he sees it in his own self. In fact, all that he surveys become one Atma because he is able to peer behind the veil of the gross world and see the same universally sublime and immutable Truth as the subtle Atma everywhere. When he reaches this enlightened state when he understands the real meaning of 'non-duality', it can be safely said of him that he has attained liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle a creature in this world [26].

[Note---¹A *child* gets a toy to play; for a little while he remains engrossed and infatuated with it, then he throws it away and forgets it for good. He starts doing something else and never bothers about that toy again. A child is also not bothered about all that is happening around him in this world as long as he is playing with the same toy; he remains lost within himself. A child also makes an easy friend and hardly can be called anybody's enemy. A child is easy to please and befriend. A child has a pure and innocent heart which is untainted or biased by any worldly considerations. A child would treat everything alike; it would not distinguish between a rope and a snake. That is why a friar is compared to a child—pure and uncorrupt, unattached and unbothered, one who remains engrossed within himself and is oblivious of the external world, one who is a friend of all and enemy of none; one who treats all alike.

Jesus Christ has clearly emphasised this fact about the child in the Holy Bible, Gospel of St. Matthew, 18/1-5 when he says, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven; and Jesus called a little child unto him and set him in their midst; and he said—Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven; and who receiveth one such little child in my name receiveth me'.]

27. When all the desires, yearnings, hopes and expectations of the heart subside, calm down, or are eliminated and vanquished altogether, then he (the Sanyasi), though being mortal like other ordinary creatures, becomes immortal and tastes the exhilarating elixir of bliss and happiness obtained by contentedness [27].

[Note—No one can hope to fulfill all his dreams and accomplish all his desires in full. Some part of it will certainly remain unfulfilled. For an ordinary man, this is a cause of frustration, dismay, distress and perplexity. He begins to pursue his objective with renewed vigour and might even succeed in actually accomplishing the

unfulfilled part of his objective, but all this leaves a trail of consequences, good or bad, for him. For example, his peace of mind is affected, his body groans under the stress; he cannot please all around him and this leaves so many disgruntled people, and so on and so forth. In brief, 'true peace' is never possible unless all worldly aspirations and expectations are done with for good. 'To become immortal' is a metaphor for being liberated from the dark pit of delusions and illusions, because the latter create the fear of failures and getting trapped. A person who has no desires and aspirations will not have the chance to face failures and frustrations. The peace and bliss that is attendant to such detachment is tantamount to being freed from the bondage of fear, frustration, distress, dismay, vexations, uncertainties and perplexities which are symbolic signs of death of the freedom of the spirit.]

28. Oh dear gentleman! A Sanyasi who falters from his path, who abandons or violates any of the doctrines and sacrosanct codes of conduct meant for such an exalted and hallowed life of a Sanyasi, who falls prey to temptations (which are like baits thrown by the devil), is equivalent to a person who has compromised on his manhood, who has ruined his reputation of manliness and courage as well as of having the virtues of fortitude, strength and virility. Such a man is equivalent to a person who has killed a noble Brahmin or has harmed the cause of Brahm, is like a person who has killed an embryo (i.e. has done an abortion which is equivalent to murder of a helpless and innocent infant), and is like a great and unpardonable sinner.

A Parivrajak (a renunciate Sanyasi, friar, monk, mendicant, ascetic, recluse) who abandons any of the strict vows taken at the time of taking to Sanyas is like a thief, is like an adulterer who has extra-marital affair with the wife of his Guru (teacher), is like the one who betrays a friend, and is deemed to be most unfaithful, disloyal, ungrateful and treacherous by nature.

He is condemned from all higher and noble worlds, and is relegated to and dumped in the backyards of creation and goes to a most disgraceful lower world. [That is, he is convicted of a serious crime, and like a criminal is condemned to the gallows, as it were.]

In this context, there is this established doctrine:--'A thief, a drunkard, one who has sexual relationship with the wife of his teacher, and a betrayer of a friend can free themselves of these sins by repentance and atoning for them by doing penances, but violating, compromising, abandoning or showing disrespect towards any of the sacrosanct and inviolable principles, signs, vows and tenets pertaining to the order of Sanyas, whether implied or explicit, whether invisible or visible, can never expect to have any forgiveness or leniency shown to him for his errors of commission or omission, for his misdeeds and falling prey to temptations under any pretext whatsoever [28].

29. Parivrajak (as defined above) who abandons any of the sacred marks or signs and does not follow the inviolable tenets of the order of Sanyasis (Parivrajaks), whether they are external signs (such as a staff or the sacred thread) and behaviours (such as begging for food and living alone in a secluded place), or internal temperaments and inclinations (such as being disinterested in and unattached to the affairs of the world, especially his family and kin, being of a calm mind and equitable demeanours towards all, being contemplative and meditative, being tolerant and forgiving etc.), is always surrounded by troubles and miseries (i.e. he never finds peace), is continuously tormented and pursued by misfortunes and adversities whether he prefers to stay at one place or roams around in far off places.

Such people cannot hope and cannot expect to have an auspicious end or have any success in their spiritual pursuit even in a long time [29].

30. A righteous person who is steadfast, patient, courageous, resilient and serious in his pursuit of Sanyas should refrain from taking shelter in any 'Ashram'¹ other than the one that gives him an opportunity to have 'Moksha' (meaning liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation of the soul from the fetters that tie down a creature to this deluding and entrapping world). Verily, those who are fortunate enough to find shelter in this hermitage called 'Moksha-Ashram', the stage which is the final launching pad for liberation and deliverance from this entrapping world, and then unfortunately step down from this high altar, will have no solace and succour anywhere else. They would have lost a golden opportunity, as it were. [30].

[Note---¹The word *Ashram* literally refers to a hermitage, a shelter for recluses, a refuge-house or any other place meant to house those who have left their homes and have no where else to go. But here the word is used to denote a way of life governed by a set of rules with a particular aim in mind; a school of thought or philosophy which directs its adherents so that they can lead a better life by following a particular line of thought and philosophy, and regulate their deeds and actions accordingly. In Hinduism, there are four Ashrams--viz. (a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style, (b) Grihastha — when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the second phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life and dealings with this deceptive world with all their accompanying horrifying problems, (c) Vaanprastha —this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas —this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation and begging for food, and single mindedly pursuing the goal of emancipation and salvation for the soul.

This verse essentially means that a true seeker of Moksha (spiritual emancipation and salvation) should be focused on his goal of attaining Moksha. All other things become secondary and inconsequential for him. If he finds that a particular way of life is more conducive to his mental peace and would help him in obtaining Moksha, although it might not find express mention or sanction in the scriptures or may also be unconventional and untraditional, but if it suits him nevertheless, he is free to adopt it and pursue it. We will observe the openness in the approach of the Upanishads. After instilling fear of punishment for violating any of the sacrosanct rules, the Upanishads become magnanimous and liberal, leaving the man to decide things for himself as he grows mature. Initial discipline is necessary just like a child needs to learn discipline in the formative years of his life, but when the same child grows up to become a responsible adult he is left to fend for himself and decide his own future. But the root of his way of thinking, his manners, his temperament, his outlook for life and his behavioural norms as an adult have been moulded during his earlier days. His adult life would reflect the discipline that he was subjected to as a child by his parents and teachers. The same logic applies to a Sanyasi. In the initial stages of Sanyas, he is supposed to adhere strictly to certain fixed laid out rules of conduct, but later on this

is relaxed and he is supposed to look after himself and select the path best suited to him.

So we see that once a person has reached the last stage which is considered as the doorway to final liberation, and then wavers and falls, then obviously he is most unfortunate! This is what is meant here in this verse.]

31. A person who has just ascended the high altar of the ‘Order of Sanyasis/Parivrajaks’, accepts its vows, and then falters or wavers in upholding the sanctity and holiness of that exalted state, should be regarded as ‘fallen and disgraceful, lowly and condemned, worthy of reproach and sanction’. This is the order of the Vedas; this is their edict and final verdict; this is the discipline outlined by them [31].

32. Oh dear gentleman! A person who remains steady and unwavering on the chosen path which is truly holy and traditionally sanctioned as the correct path that is the righteous and auspicious way to follow for a renunciate ascetic who is an ardent follower of Lord Vishnu, is regarded as the one who has vanquished all temptations and has also observed the strict laws of self restraint. He attains great fame, glory and majesty as the exemplary upholder of religious tenets. He is known throughout the world, and he knows whatever is worthy to be known in this mortal world. He is deemed to be realised about the supreme Brahm, and about everything else (i.e. he becomes all knowing and omniscient like Brahm himself). He is like an Emperor from whom nothing is hidden and for whom nothing is inaccessible.

Verily, he attains the supreme, transcendental Brahm who is the Lord Emperor of the entire creation. [It is a situation where one great king meets another king; the Sanyasi meeting his Lord, the supreme Brahm, is similar to this situation.] He becomes so much empowered with divine powers and authority that he is able to provide liberation and deliverance to his ancestors, called Pittars, his kith and kin, his brothers, friends and compatriots. [32].

33. There is a sacred hymn in this context which stipulates the following doctrine:--‘A wise person who accepts the vows of the Order of Sanyas (i.e. voluntarily decides to renounce the world and its allurements, and becomes a friar, a monk, an ascetic, a mendicant or a hermit), becomes so honourable and purified that a hundred generations before him and three hundred generations after him find liberation and deliverance. It is once in a long while, it is a rare occurrence rather than the standard norm that such enlightened and self realised, wise and erudite renunciate souls take birth in the world in order to oblige it, to benefit it by their exalted presence, to redeem it, to provide it guidance, to make it feel cared for and fulfilled and emancipated by their august presence and righteous deeds and noble actions’ [33].

[Note—The phrase ‘hundreds of generations’ is only a figure of speech, and not a physical count, to emphasise the greatness of a Sanyasi and the divine nature of his soul. He virtually becomes as holy as the supreme Lord himself. Even in today’s modern world we have numerous examples of great individuals whose lives had completely changed the course of history, and hence have affected generations after generations of peoples.]

34. The scriptures aver that a righteous, honest and steadfast Parivrajak (Sanyasi) is so spiritually powerful and potent that he provides emancipation to thirty generations of his future descendents, thirty generations of his past ancestors, and thirty generations of his descendents’ branches. [34].

[Note—If one man becomes a truthfully righteous follower of Brahm, or in other words if he is spiritually enlightened, holy and pious, that entire clan along with those who are even distantly related to them are benefited by his holiness and divinity. It is like a bright candle being lit in a dark room; the light benefits all those who are around and illuminates even the far corners of the room. An illustration will prove the point. Suppose there is a very sinful and pervert man in a family and he happens to migrate to a distant place and live for some time in an alien society. His host society will judge the whole community from where he comes by their experience of this single man, and unfortunately in this example he is not a good man. So they begin to revile that whole parent society because they treat this man as a sample representing the whole. A similar thing holds true for a good man. Taking another example, a lighted incense stick or an open bottle of perfume, though located in one certain area of a room, would however fill the entire room with their sweet fragrance. Therefore, a righteous and honourable monk renders glories and honour to his folks, whether they are his former family members or his peers in monk-hood or the society to which he belongs. People hold him in high esteem; they look unto him for selfless guidance and moral support. Verse no. 33 clearly states that such honourable souls are born once in a while. Closer home, the truth of these verses can be observed in the life of great saints and prophets—they are literally store houses of divine energy which forms as aura around them and radiates from them like the rays of the sun or moon to evenly spread everywhere and benefit all. Their presence nourishes the soul of those present near them. They personify the virtues of love, compassion, graciousness, bliss and tranquility in their best forms. Their words of wisdom guide many generations of peoples. Even after their bodily death, their august presence is felt and people of all faiths go to their tombs to seek their blessings and pray to them so as to find solace, succour and deliverance from their troubles.]

35. Even when a man is in the throes of death and grasping for breath before dying, if he honestly and sincerely says at that moment that ‘I have taken the vows of Sanyas’, or in other words gets filled with deep and true renunciation even at that eleventh hour, it must be assumed that he has indeed become a Sanyasi, and therefore all the benefits that accrue to a truthful Sanyasi would also accrue to him. Consequentially, he also is able to provide deliverance to his ancestors. This is the declaration of the Vedas [35].

[Note---One must be careful to interpret this verse. It does not mean that a man spends his entire lifetime in pursuing this materialistic world like a greedy man and say ‘I am a Sanyasi’ at the last moment and hope to join the legion of exalted souls and holy men! No, it is never possible; it is too far-fetched. This is because it is not easy to even think of Sanyas in its truest form by such a man whose mind is overwhelmed by the thoughts of the world, and who has spent his entire life wallowing in the filth of this deluding world. At the time of death he would be more concerned about his unfinished tasks, about his family, about his obligations, about his material assets, about his bodily agonies etc., and he would be so overcome by the fear of impending death that he wouldn’t have the time and the inclination to even think of such spiritual matters that require a peaceful mind and a lot of contemplation. He would be under such great physical and mental stress and distress that the prospect of taking to Sanyas can hardly occur to him.

The message here is to highlight the potentials and powers of the institution of Sanyas. This state, even if reached for such a short time, is so high and glorious that a vow taken at the last moments of a man’s life can deliver him as well as his ancestors; so one can imagine the immense benefits that accrue if a whole life is spent pursuing it! This realisation would inspire righteous souls who are wise and expedient enough not to wait for the last moment and do the needful while still there is ample time so that they can enjoy its benefits to the full.]

36. Oh dear gentleman! A wise man should not preach these great tenets pertaining to the most righteous and auspicious traditional path of leading a renunciate life, which steadily takes the follower forward on the eternal and truthful path to Lord Vishnu, unless he himself is a faithful and strident follower of it. [That is, only those who lead an exemplary life of a renunciate are entitled to teach others about it. They should set an example themselves first before preaching others.]

Other than this, those who are not well versed in the principles of Vedanta and its basic teachings pertaining to the Atma or the immaculate soul (which is pure consciousness), who are not self realised and enlightened about the supreme nature of the Atma as a manifestation of the supreme Brahm (which is also pure consciousness), who is not an honest renunciate (i.e. is a deceitful imposter), who is not dispassionate towards and detached from the sensual objects of this material world, who is not of a pure and clear mind and intellect, who is not humble, pious and polite, and who is not an honest and sincere seeker of the Truth who would endeavour to seek it at all costs—such persons should not preach the teachings of this Upanishad.

The sacred hymn incorporating this doctrine asserting these sanctions or restrictions is this:--‘The Brahm-Vidya (the truthful body of knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm) once assumed a form and came to a Brahmin, seeking his protection. It said to him, ‘Oh Brahmin! Protect me. I am your asset. Do not hand me over (i.e. teach me) to those who are wicked, deceitful, imposters, lowly, stupid, ignorant and pervert. [That is, protect me from unscrupulous and incompetent people!] If you do not do that, I will lose my stupendous potentials, powers and glories’. [36].

37. Before teaching or preaching this profound knowledge to those who come seeking it, the aspirant (i.e. the applicant) should be properly judged and tested as to their eligibility to receive this divine knowledge pertaining to the Atma/soul. The criterions used for such judgment are the following:--his ability to observe self restraint, his conquest of desires and yearnings, his purity of thought and purpose, his eagerness to do penances and observe austerities, his lack of pride, ego, haughtiness and arrogance, his alertness and diligence, his intellectual aptitude and astuteness, and his ability to comply with the strict laws of Bramacharya (celibacy, abstinence, self control of the sense organs, ability to undergo hardships and sufferings, ability to concentrate on contemplation and remain steady in his spiritual pursuits, and his eagerness to lead a strict and regimental life of self discipline) . [That is, the knowledge enshrined in this Upanishad should be given only to competent and eligible persons who have the proper aptitude and intellectual depth; otherwise it is likely to be spoilt and misused like giving pure gold to a foolish person who would barter it for worthless things.]

38. Those people who, inspite of being educated, do not show due respect to their elders such as their parents and teachers by their deeds and actions, by their thoughts and behaviours, by their words and speech, the food offered as charity/alms by such people are not to be accepted by those who aspire to attain spiritual welfare and auspiciousness for themselves. Even the teacher of such sinful people should refuse to accept food offered to him by them. Similarly, the scriptures advice that an ascetic, a monk, a hermit, a mendicant, a friar or any one who follows the auspicious and noble path of Truth and self realisation should not accept food (as charity/alms) from such men and their household [38].

39. [This verse describes the importance and glory of a moral preceptor, spiritual guide, an all-rounder advisor and a practical teacher, called a Guru. It is deemed here that he is wise, erudite, sagacious, learned and enlightened, simply because only a person who knows something himself can teach it to others; the rest are only imposters.] Guru¹ is the supreme Dharma. That is, one should faithfully serve and follow the advice and instructions of one's Guru just like one must sincerely, diligently and ardently follow one's religiously sanctioned norms of behaviour and righteous codes of conduct, duties and responsibilities, which are collectively called a person's Dharma as established by the scriptures. It also refers to a noble conduct that is conducive to happiness and liberation from the shackles that tie a creature to the deluding and entrapping world.

Likewise, the Guru is the last shelter and refuge for a person (because it is he who guides a person when he is confused, doubtful and perplexed; when he needs support and succour; when he needs a true friend by his side). It is he who guides a person on the correct path and removes all consternations from his mind; it is in him that a disciple can confide without any fear of betrayal, back-stabbing, blackmailing and revenge. It is he who sincerely and selflessly advises a person on all matters as it is in him a person blindly reposes all faith and confidence. In fact, a Guru is the best council.

A person who does not show due respect and honour to the Guru who has selflessly given him the bounty of truthful knowledge, who teaches him and makes him wiser, more knowledgeable, skilled and educated, then all the Gyan (i.e. all the knowledge, all skills, all wisdom, all erudition and all learning that the person has acquired or gained) as well as all the good effects of the Tapa (i.e. penances, austerities, sufferings and hardships that he has endured in his quest for an all round welfare and enhancement) gradually fade away or decline and lose their potentials, powers, prowess and effects, rendering that unfaithful, ungrateful and disloyal disciple shorn of all glories, fame and moral strengths that should have otherwise accrued to him just like the case where water slowly seeps out of an earthen pot made from half-baked mud or clay. [In other words, if a man does not show due respect to his teacher, he will be cursed and all the good virtues that would have normally given him good name and fame would abandon him. He would be deemed to be unfaithful, ungrateful and disloyal, and would be just like a traitor who has betrayed his country. No good virtues would stay with him. This verse is an extension of the observations made in verse no. 38 above.] [39].

[Note--¹The word *Guru* has two parts---(1) 'Gu'—meaning darkness, and (2) 'Ru'—meaning light. Hence the word 'Guru' means a person who can remove the darkness symbolising ignorance and illusions that has engulfed the disciple from all sides and act as a hindrance or an obstacle in his emancipation and salvation by showing him the truthful path, or lighting his path with the light of knowledge and holding out his hands to support him when he falters.

He is the one who is expected to have risen above self vested interests and keeps the welfare of the disciple as his main objective. He is the one who has transcended the mundane and has acquired sublime awareness of the supreme Reality, because only those who are themselves aware of anything can hope to tell others about it. A true Guru is treated as being equivalent to the 'Trinity Gods'—(1) Brahma, the creator, because he creates or helps to take birth good virtues and noble qualities in his disciple; (2) Vishnu, the sustainer, because he nourishes, sustains and helps to inculcate and develop wisdom and enlightenment in his

disciple and leads him on the truthful path; and (3) Shiva, the concluder, because he helps to end, conclude and eliminate ignorance and negative traits in his disciple. He is 'God like' because he functions in all these capacities at the same time, besides being exalted in all knowledge, being virtuous, of high moral character and beyond reproach, being a source of unbound spiritual energy, being self realised and enlightened, and being eternal in the sense that what he advises to his disciple, the path he shows, the light that he lights in the dark heart of the creature, makes him immortal. Therefore, a Guru is honoured for the divine virtues that he represents and embodies, that he teaches and implements in his life, for the divinity, for the Lord and for the personification of the great teachings of the scriptures that he exemplifies. It is not his physical body that is of any value for veneration, for the soul and not the body is venerable.

There is a minor Upanishad called 'Dwayo-panishad' which describes the chief characteristics of a true Guru. It has only seven Mantras.]

40. A person who has great devotion for his chosen God, who is his personal deity whom he worships and adores with great devotion and faith, and shows the same intensity and depth of devotion for his Guru, then such a wise man—who incidentally is known as the one who is enlightened about the true meaning of the supreme Brahman—attains the highest stature attainable by a wise, self realised and enlightened person. That is, by the blessings of his Guru, he rises higher and higher in whatever he does, gains acclaim and achieves greater success in all his endeavours. His education bears him fruit; his name and fame spread far and wide, and in due course of time he is shown the same respect and honour by his descendants, followers or disciples as the case may be as he has shown to his own Guru. This is the proclamation and mandate of the Vedas; this is their edict, this is their assertion and this is the sanction of their canons. Verily, this is what this Upanishad declares. Amen! [40].

---Shanti Paath---

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CHAPTER—19

MUKTIKO-PANISHAD

(or the MUKTI UPANISHAD)

Belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the 'Mukti Upanishad', also known as the 'Muktiko-panishad', is revealed as a conversation between Lord Ram and his most ardent and wise devotee Hanuman. As the name suggests, it unravels the secrets of such eclectic concept, inter alia, as Mukti (liberation and deliverance of the soul, emancipation and salvation of the creature), its various connotations and importance, its practical application, and how to achieve it. Besides this, this Upanishad tells us about the origin of the Vedas and their classification, and it is the only place where we find the listing of all the Upanishads appearing in the different Vedas; in fact this Upanishad classifies all of them according to their respective Vedas, and in the sequence in which they appear there. This forms the subject matter of Canto 1.

Canto 2 elaborates on the metaphysical concepts of the previous canto, and goes on to elaborately describe other relevant spiritual ideas as Samadhi, (the trance-like state when the person becomes oblivious of the surrounding world and remains engrossed in perpetual bliss which is an accompaniment of self realisation of the Atma), the Chitta (the importance and relevance of the mind and the intellect in the spiritual pursuit of a man), the different Vasanas and Vrittis (the inherent worldly passions and desires that form an integral nature of a man), Ahankar (ego, pride and haughtiness that he possesses), the importance and significance of Gyan (truthful knowledge and awareness of the reality; enlightenment and self realisation), and other relevant subjects such as vanquishing all negative traits that can clear the path for the creature so that it can achieve the ultimate goal of emancipation and salvation. It describes ways of how an aspirant or seeker can purge all the various negative traits that bog him down in this mundane materialistic world, and guides him on how to harness all his spiritual potentials to help him in his spiritual pursuits.

Canto-1

Conversation between Sri Ram and Hanuman; the importance and glory of Vedanta; the distinction between different 'Muktis' (i.e. different ways the soul finds liberation and deliverance from this artificial and entrapping world, thereby providing the creature emancipation and salvation as well as eternal peace and beatitude); the names of 108 Upanishads and their classification according to the Vedas; eligibility for hearing the Upanishads.

हरिःॐ॥ अयोध्यानगरे रम्ये रत्नमण्डपमध्यमे लसीताभरतसौमित्रिशत्रुघ्नायैः समन्वितम् ॥१॥

OM salutations! In Ayodhya, Sri Ram was seated in the centre of a charming gem-studded pavilion on a beautiful gem-studded throne. He was accompanied by Sita, Bharat, Laxman, Shatrughan etc. (1).

सनकाद्यैर्मुनिगणैर्वसिष्ठाद्यैः शुकादिभिः ल अन्यैर्भागवतैश्चापि स्तूयमानमहर्निशम् ॥२॥

Sages and seers such as Sanak and Sanandan, the elders of the society and erudite teachers such as Vashistha and others, as well as ardent devotees such as Shuka etc. used to worship him and sing his glories day and night (2).

धीविक्रयासहस्राणां साक्षिणं निर्विकारिणम् ल स्वरूपध्याननिरतं समाधिविरमे हरिम् ॥३॥

Once, Hari (one of the names of Lord Vishnu, here referring to Sri Ram because he is an incarnation of Vishnu)—who knows the inner thoughts of all, who is omniscient and all knowing, who resides inside all the creatures as their pure conscious Atma or soul, who is a witness of all that is happening in this world, and who is faultless, without any taints, and is immaculate and impeccable—was seated in a deep contemplative mood, meditating on his pure-self (3).

भक्त्या शुश्रूषया रामं स्तुवन्प्रच्छ मारुतिः ल राम त्वं परमात्मासि सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः ॥४॥

Once, Hari (one of the names of Lord Vishnu, here referring to Sri Ram) When he woke up from his deep trance-like state of Samadhi, Hanuman praised him, paid his obeisance to him, and asked him most respectfully and prayerfully, 'Oh Sri Ram! You are the supreme Soul of the creation called Parmatma. You are an incarnation of the supreme transcendental Lord God called Brahm who is the ultimate truth and reality

of this creation, who is pure and eternal consciousness, and who is an embodiment of supreme and eternal bliss and happiness; you embody these virtues in your divine Being (4).

इदानीं त्वां रघुश्रेष्ठ प्रणमामि मुहुर्मुहः । त्वद्रूपं ज्ञातुमिच्छामि तत्त्वतो राम मुक्तये ॥५॥
अनायासेन येनाहं मुच्येयं भवबन्धनात् । कृपया वद मे राम येन मुक्तो भवाम्यहम् ॥६॥

Oh Lord who is the best in the clan of king Raghu (of Ayodhya)! I repeatedly bow before you in great reverence. Oh Lord! I am desirous of knowing your true and essential divine and holy form which is the provider of 'Mukti'—i.e. that form which bestows easy deliverance to the creature from the cycle of birth and death; the form which has the potential to provide emancipation and salvation without much troubles—as a result of which I can find spiritual liberation from the fetters shackling me to this mundane, deluding and entrapping world. Oh Sri Ram! Please describe it to me so that I can find emancipation and salvation' (5-6).

साधु पृष्टं महाबाहो वदामि शृणु तत्त्वतः । वेदान्ते सुप्रतिष्ठोऽहं वेदान्तं समुप्राश्रय ॥७॥

Sri Ram replied, 'Oh the most valiant and valorous, most powerful and strong Hanuman! You have asked me a good question. Listen, I will tell you the essence (i.e. the fundamental principals). My true form is properly described in Vedanta (Upanishads). Hence you must take the shelter of those scriptures to learn about it and quench your thirst for truthful knowledge' (7).

वेदान्ताः के रघुश्रेष्ठ वर्तन्ते कुत्र ते वद । हनूमञ्छृणु वक्ष्यामि वेदान्तस्थितिमञ्जसा ॥८॥

Hanuman asked, 'Oh the most exalted amongst the members of Raghu's clan! What is called 'Vedanta', and where is it to be found? Please tell me'.

Sri Ram answered, 'Hanuman! I shall tell you immediately about the location of Vedanta (i.e. the place the scriptures collectively called Vedanta are to be found) (8).

निःश्वासभूता मे विष्णोर्वेदा जाताः सुविस्तराः । तिलेषु तैलवद्वेदे वेदान्तः सुप्रतिष्ठितः ॥९॥

The detailed, vast and voluminous treatises known as the Vedas were produced out of my breath. Like oil in the sesame seed, Vedanta is an integral part of the Vedas, they are established in the Vedas as their inseparable part' (9).

राम वेदाः कतिविधास्तेषां शाखाश्च राघव । तासूपनिषदः काः स्युः कृपया वद तत्त्वतः ॥१०॥

Hanuman asked again, 'Oh Raghav (Sri Ram)! How many types of Vedas are there, how many branches do they have, and which are the Upanishads amongst them—please tell me the reality about it all' (10).

श्रीराम उवाच । ऋग्वेदादिविभागेन वेदाश्चत्वार ईरिताः । तेषां शाखा ह्यनेकाः स्युस्तासूपनिषदस्तथा ॥११॥

ऋग्वेदस्य तु शाखाः स्युरेकविंशतिसंख्यकाः । नवाधिकशतं शाखा यजुवो मारुतात्मज ॥१२॥

सहस्रसंख्यया जाताः शाखाः साम्नः परन्तप । अथर्वणस्य शाखाः स्युः पञ्चाशद्वेदतो हरे ॥१३॥

एकैकस्यास्तु शाखाया एकैकोपनिषन्मता । तासामेकामृचं यश्च पठते भक्तितो मयि ॥१४॥

Sri Ram replied, 'There are four Vedas— Rig, Yajur, Sam and Atharva. Each of them has many branches, and these branches have many Upanishads each. Oh the son of the Wind God! The Rig Veda has twenty one branches, and the Yajur Veda has one

hundred and nine branches. Oh the one who instills fear in his enemies! The Sam Veda has a thousand branches. And oh the most exalted amongst the ‘Kapis’¹, the Atharva Veda has fifty branches. Each branch is said to have at least one Upanishad. A person who reads/recites even a single hymn (verse) of those Upanishads with sincere devotion (11-14)—

[Note—¹The word usually used for Hanuman is ‘Kapi’ because he was born in the monkey race. But the word has a wider application, such as ‘the one who is like an elephant’ and ‘like a sun’. The former indicates that the person is most strong and powerful like the elephant as well as wise because Lord Ganesh, the God who is praised and honoured before any other Gods during any religious ceremony, is also elephant-headed. The latter word ‘sun’ is a metaphor for wisdom and enlightenment as well as for the illumination of knowledge that eliminates darkness of ignorance and delusions. Hanuman epitomizes both.]

— स मत्सायुज्यपदीं प्राप्नोति मुनिदुर्लभाम् । राम केचिन्मुनिश्रेष्ठ मुक्तिरेकेति चक्षिरे । १५ ।।

— is able to obtain oneness with me, a stature known as ‘Sayujya’, which is rare even for the sages to achieve’.

Hanuman said, ‘Oh Sri Ram! Some exalted sages say that there is only one sort of ‘Mukti’ (liberation and deliverance from this artificial, mundane, entrapping and deluding world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death; emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature) (15).

— केचित्त्ववन्नामभजनात्काश्यां तारोपदेशतः । अन्य तु सांख्ययोगेन भक्तियोगेन चापरे । १६ ।।

Some say that it is possible by remembering your divine and holy name (‘Ram’), while others assert that Lord Shiva utters your ‘Tarak Mantra’¹ in the ears of those dying at Varanasi, thereby giving them deliverance. Some sages say that Mukti is possible by pursuing ‘Sankhya yoga’ (which is one of the six schools of Hindu philosophies), while there are others who aver that having ‘Bhakti’, or having sincere devotion and faith in the Lord, is the only means of obtaining it (16).

— अन्ये वेदान्तवाक्यार्थविचारात्परमर्षयः । लालोक्यादिविभागेन चतुर्धा मुक्तिरीरिता । १७ ।।

Again, there are others who prescribe that ‘Mukti’ is possible by seriously contemplating upon and understanding the import and significance of the profound words pronounced by Vedanta (Upanishads). [That is, emancipation and salvation is possible when one acquires truthful knowledge about the reality and eliminates falsehoods, which would enable him to realise the true nature of the pure conscious ‘self’ that the Atma is, thereby setting him free from the bondages of ignorance and delusions which are at the root of all troubles pertaining to the creature’s entanglement with this world. A person ‘free’ from ignorance is deemed to be liberated; he is deemed to be delivered from this artificial and entrapping world because he can see through the illusionary mirage-like smoke screen that this world represents in spiritual terms.]

There are some sages who say that there are four types of ‘Muktis’ —Salokya, Sayujya, Samipya and Kaivalya’ (17).

[Note—¹The Lord’s *Tarak Mantra* has been elaborately described in chapter no.2, canto 2 and 4 of Ram Uttartapiniyopanishad. However, briefly it is the following--‘Ram Chandraye Namaha’ (राम चन्द्राय नमः), and ‘Ram Bhadraye Namaha’ (राम भद्राय नमः).

²The four types of *Muktis* mentioned above are the following--(i) Salokya (सालोक्य) which refers to finding an abode in the supreme divine abode of the chosen deity of the seeker; (ii) Sayujya (सायुज्य) which refers to become one with the Lord; to merge one's own identity with the Lord so that one becomes inseparable from his Lord; this form of salvation is very similar to the one that which comes under the definition of Kaivalya; (iii) Samipya (सामीप्य) which refers to being able to reside near the Lord to serve him; and (iv) Kaivalya (कैवल्य) meaning 'the only one of its kind', thereby implying that there is no other forms of Mukti except the one when the Atma abandons the gross body which is like a shackle for it, and then inseparably and indistinguishably merging with the supreme transcendental Soul of the cosmos. This is the eclectic and holistic form of Mukti extolled by the Upanishads. This Mukti means the dissolution or merger of the individual soul with the parent supreme Soul. The realisation that the soul of the individual creature is the same as the cosmic Soul residing in all the creatures of this world, to see the supreme Brahm as a resident of the inner-self of the individual creature as its Atma, and identifying oneself with that Atma which is synonymous with that supreme Brahm, which in turn leads to the recognition of non-dual nature of the soul of the creature and the supreme Soul of the cosmos, realising therefore that there is no notion as 'duality' when dealing with divinity and the supreme transcendental being called 'Brahm' vis-à-vis the creature, and other such basic tenets of Vedanta are the foundation upon which Kaivalya Mukti rests. According to Yoga Upanishads, Kaivalya Mukti is achieved even when the creature is alive because it primarily involves total realisation and disassociation from the body and the world with which it has to interact. When the seeker dies, he simply abandons his mortal coil, the gross body consisting of the different sense organs, and merges his Pran or the Atma with the macrocosm outside. Since the word 'Kaivalya' means 'the only', this form of Mukti refers to the realisation of the one and the only spiritual Truth which is the absolute and irrefutable Reality in creation]

____स_ होवाच_ श्रीरामः_ । कैवल्यमुक्तिरेकैव_ पारमार्थिकरूपिणी_ । दुराचाररतो_ वापि_ मन्नामभजनात्कपे_ ।१८।।

सालोक्यमुक्तिमाप्नोति_ न_ तु_ लोकान्तरादिकम्_ । काश्यां_ तु_ ब्रह्मनालेऽस्मिन्मृतो_ मत्तारमाप्नुयात्_ ।१९।।

पुनरावृत्तिरहितां_ मुक्तिं_ प्राप्नोति_ मानवः_ । यत्र_ कुत्रापि_ वा_ काश्यां_ मरणे_ स_ महेश्वरः_ ।२०।।

जन्तोर्दक्षिणकर्णे_ तु_ मत्तारं_ समुपादिशेत्_ । निर्धूताशेषपापौघो_ मत्सारूप्यं_ भजत्ययम्_ ।२१।।

Sri Ram replied, 'The 'Kaivalya Mukti' is of only one type, and it is called the ultimate emancipation and salvation. [The word Kaivalya itself means 'only, non-dual, exclusive and unique'.] This form of Mukti is synonymous with the highest stature attainable by following the path of spiritualism. Besides it, even those involved in worldly evils and misconduct can obtain my 'Salokya Mukti' by remembering and repeating my holy and divine name with due devotion and sincerity; they do not have to bother about being sent to another place away from my abode.

Those who die in the geographical area called Kashi (Varanasi), at a location called 'Brahma-naal', obtain that kind of salvation on the strength of my Tarak Mantra (see verse no.15-17) which is characterised by the freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Wherever one dies in the realm of Lord Shiva, the latter utters my holy Mantra, which is a bestower of emancipation, in the right ears of the dying person so that all the sins accumulated by him during his life are purged or destroyed,

and he becomes one with me. That is called ‘Sarupya Mukti’ (i.e. the person assumes a divine form which is similar to that of mine). (18-21).

सैव_सालोक्यसारूप्यमुक्तिरित्यभिधीयते_।_सदाचाररतो_भूत्वा_द्विजो_नित्यमनन्यधीः_॥२२॥

मयि_सर्वात्मके_भावो_मत्सामीप्यं_भजत्ययम्_।_सैव_सालोक्यसारूप्यसामीप्या_मुक्तिरिष्यते_॥२३॥

This is also called ‘Salokya-Sarupya Mukti’, because in this form of Mukti, the person not only obtains my divine and holy abode but also assumes a divine and holy form that resembles my form. In other words, such a person becomes as holy and reverend as me.]

The wise ones who follow the ethical path of morality and righteousness as well as who constantly remember me and contemplate upon my divine form as being the supreme, transcendental, all-pervading Atma that is the pure conscious soul residing uniformly in all the creatures of this creation—they achieve closeness with me, they reside with me. This type of Mukti is called ‘Salokya-Sarupya-Samipya’ (i.e. a state where the creature gets the good fortune of residing in my abode, assumes a divine form which is similar to that of mine, and gets an opportunity to stay in my vicinity or very close to me) (22-23).

मुरूपदिष्टमार्गेण_ध्याथन्मद्गुणमव्ययम्_।_मत्सायुज्यं_द्विजः_सम्यग्भजेद्भ्रमरकीटवत्_॥२४॥

When the wise one follows the path shown by his erudite, self-realised and enlightened moral preceptor and teacher (called his Guru) and contemplates upon my form which is faultless, beyond reproach, attributeless, eternal, infinite, imperishable and powerful, he becomes one with me, inseparable from me, and obtains the supreme state called ‘Sayujya Mukti’ like the bumble-bee. (24).

सैव_सायुज्यमुक्तिः_स्याद्ब्रह्मानन्दकरी_शिवा_।_चतुर्विद्या_तु_या_मुक्तिर्भदुपासनया_भवेत्_॥२५॥

With this form of Mukti, he obtains bliss, happiness and peace that come with Brahm realisation. That stature is the one that bestows auspiciousness as well as supreme bliss and contentedness to the creature.

Therefore, there are four types of Muktis obtained by worshipping me—viz, Sayujya, Sarupya, Salokya and Kaivalya (25).

इयं_कैवल्य_मुक्तिस्तु_केनोपायेन_सिध्यति_।_माण्डूक्यमेकमेवालं_मुमुक्षूणां_विमुक्तये_॥२६॥

Now listen to the means which gives the ‘Kaivalya Mukti’ to the creature. Merely Mandukyopanishad is potent enough to provide Mukti to the sincere seeker/aspirant (26).

तथाप्यसिद्धं_चेज्ज्ञानं_दशोपनिषदं_पठ_।_ज्ञानं_लब्ध्वाऽचिरादेव_मामकं_धाम_यास्यसि_॥२७॥

If one is not able to obtain sufficient ripeness or maturity of spiritual knowledge about the nature of the pure-self, the Atma, Brahm as well as about the absolute Realty and irrefutable Truth of creation and the creature itself, then one should study ten other Upanishads. By doing so, he will soon acquire truthful knowledge about the absolute, universal, irrefutable, eternal reality and essence of existence which enables the seeker to accept me in my glorious, divine, splendorous and radiantly illuminated form which is non-dual in nature. [That is, the seeker will realise that his pure-self, the Atma, is the same as me, and this realisation of non-duality and non-distinction between his pure-self and the supreme Brahm that is me, will fill his inner-self with

the dazzling light of enlightenment which is synonymous with supreme bliss and God-realisation.] (27).

तथापि दृढता नो चेद्विज्ञानस्याञ्जनासुत । द्वात्रिंशाख्योपनिषदं समभ्यस्य निवर्तय ॥२८॥

Oh the son of Anjani (i.e. Hanuman)! If your 'Gyan' (i.e. truthful knowledge of the absolute, eternal, universal, incontrovertible and irrefutable Reality and Truth) still does not become firmly rooted or established (or if you still do not have full contentedness and bliss, you still strive for more knowledge and still have doubts and queries left), then you should study, contemplate upon and practice the tenets/teachings of the other thirty two principal Upanishads comprehensively and systematically. By doing so, you will be freed from this mundane, deluding and entrapping world (28).

[Note--That is, he burns all his egos and other faults associated with delusions and ignorance associated with this world, realises the true nature of his pure-self, becomes enlightened, and consequentially, he becomes one with the supreme Brahm. Even as a bumble bee remains oblivious of the surrounding world when it remains engrossed in drinking nectar from the flower, such a self-realised person remains totally absorbed in bliss and peace obtained by Brahm realisation which comes with truthful 'self' realisation. These two states are synonymous with each other. So though he has a physical body like the bee, he has virtually lost his independent worldly identity and remains ever engrossed in drinking the ambrosia of bliss and happiness that comes with enlightenment and self-realisation. Further, as the bee has its mind and heart perpetually riveted to the nectar of the flower, this person also remains perpetually rooted to Brahm and its accompanying sublime and ethereal experiences.]

विदेहमुक्ताविच्छा चेदष्टोत्तरशतं पठ । तासां क्रमं सशान्तिं च शृणु वक्ष्यामि तत्त्वतः ॥२९॥
 ईशकेनकठंप्रश्नमुण्डमाण्डूक्यतित्तिरिः । ऐतरेयं च छान्दोग्यं वृहदारण्यकं तथा ॥३०॥
 ब्रह्मकैवल्यजाबालश्चेताश्चो हंस आरुणिः । गर्भो नारायणो हंसो बिन्दुर्नादशिरःशिखा ॥३१॥
 मैत्रायणी कौषीतकी बृहज्जाबालतापनी । कालाग्निरुद्रमैत्रेयी सुबालक्षुरिमन्त्रिका ॥३२॥
 सर्वसारं निरालम्बं रहस्यं वज्रसूचिकम् । तेजोनादध्यानविद्यायोगतत्त्वात्मबोधकम् ॥३३॥
 परिव्राट् त्रिशिखी सीता चूडा निर्वाणमण्डलम् । दक्षिणा शरभं स्कन्दं महानारायणहृदयम् ॥३४॥
 रहस्यं रामतपनं वासुदेवं च मुद्गलम् । शाण्डिल्यं पैङ्गलं भिक्षुमहच्छारीरकं शिखा ॥३५॥
 तुरीयातीतसंन्यासपरिव्राजाक्षमालिका । अव्यक्तैकाक्षरं पूर्णा सूर्याक्ष्यध्यात्मकुण्डिका ॥३६॥
 सावित्र्यात्मा पाशुपतं परं ब्रह्मावधूतकम् । त्रिपुरातपनं देवीत्रिपुरा कठभावना ।
 हृदयं कुण्डली भस्म रुद्राक्षगणदर्शनम् ॥३७॥
 तारसारमहावाक्यपञ्चब्रह्माग्निहोत्रकम् । गोपालतपनं कृष्णं याज्ञवल्क्यं वराहकम् ॥३८॥
 शाट्यायनी हयग्रीवं दत्तात्रेयं च गारुडम् । कलिजाबालिसौभाग्यरहस्यत्रयचमुक्तिका ॥३९॥

If you desire salvation after leaving your mortal body which has already become extinct because of your dispassion and detachment towards this world, then you should make a comprehensive and integrated study of all the one hundred and one Upanishads.

Now I shall tell you the name, the order or sequence, and the respective 'Shanti Paths' of all those Upanishads. Listen carefully :- (1) Ish, (2) Ken, (3) Katho, (4) Prashna, (5) Mundak, (6) Mandukya, (7) Taittiriya, (8) Aettriya, (9) Chandogya, (10) Brihadaranyak, (11) Brahm, (12) Kaivalya, (13) Jabal, (14) Shwetashwatar, (15) Hans, (16) Arunik,

(17) Garbha, (18) Narayan, (19) Parmahans, (20) Amritbindu, (21) Amritnaad, (22) Atharvashiras, (23) Atharvashikha, (24) Maitrayani, (25) Kaushitki-brahmin, (26) Brihajjabal, (27) Nrisingh-tapini, (28) Kalagni-rudra, (29) Maitreyi, (30) Subal, (31) Kshurika, (32) Mantrika, (33) Sarvasaar, (34) Niralamb, (35) Shuk-rhasya, (36) Vajrasuchika, (37) Tejobindu, (38) Naadbindu, (39) Dhyanbindu, (40) Brahmvidya, (41) Yogtattva, (42) Atmaprobodha, (43) Naradparivrajak, (44) Trishikhi-brahmin, (45) Sita, (46) Yogchudamani, (47) Nirvan, (48) Mandal-brahmin, (49) Dakshinamurti, (50) Sharabh, (51) Skund, (52) Tripadwibhuti-mahanarayan, (53) Adwyetarak, (54) Ramrahasya, (55) Ram-tapini, (56) Vasudeo, (57) Mudgal, (58) Shandilya, (59) Paingal, (60) Bhikshuk, (61) Mahat, (62) Sharirak, (63) Yogshikha, (64) Turiyateet, (65) Sanyas, (66) Paramhans-parivrajak, (67) Akshamala, (68) Avyakta, (69) Ekaakshar, (70) Annapurna, (71) Surya, (72) Akshi, (73) Adhyatma, (74) Kundika, (75) Savitri, (76) Atma, (77) Paashupath, (78) Par-brahm, (79) Avadhut, (80) Tripura-tapini, (81) Devi, (82) Tripura, (83) Kathrudra, (84) Bhavna, (85) Rudra-hridya, (86) Yogkundali, (87) Bhasmajabal, (88) Rudrakshajabal, (89) Ganapati, (90) Jabaldarshan, (91) Tarsar, (92) Mahavakya, (93) Panch-brahm, (94) Pranagnihotra, (95) Gopal-tapini, (96) Krishna, (97) Yagyawalkya, (98) Varaha, (99) Shatyayaniya, (100) Hayegrivha, (101) Dattatreya, (102) Garud, (103) Kalisantaran, (104) Jabali, (105) Saubhagya-laxmi, (106) Saraswati-rashya, (107) Bahavarich and (108) Muktikopanishad (29-39).

— एवमष्टोत्तरशतं भावनान्नयनाशनम् । ज्ञानवैराग्यदं पुंसां वासनान्नयनाशनम् ॥४०॥

All these one hundred eight Upanishads have the potential to destroy and terminate the three types of torments, called 'Traitap'¹ from which a man suffers.

By reading them attentively, by contemplating upon them with diligence, and by studying them with concentration, one achieves 'Gyan' (i.e. truthful knowledge of the absolute, universal, irrefutable and eternal Reality, leading to enlightenment and realisation), develops 'Vairagya' (i.e. renunciation and detachment towards this mundane, deluding and entrapping world and all its material objects and allurements). Such a wise and erudite person is also able to vanquish all the three types of 'Vasanas'² (40).

[Note—¹The three sufferance or torments that afflict all the creatures of this creation are the following—(a) *Adhibhautik*—sufferances that pertain to his body, such as disease, old age etc., and problems arising from other terrestrial creatures, such as thieves, enemies and kings; (b) *Adhidaivik*—sufferance that pertain to Gods and malignant stars; and (c) *Adhyatmik*—hurdles that come in the creature's spiritual well-being.

²*Vasanas* are the numerous attractions, desires, yearnings, infatuations and other natural inclinations of the creature that tie him to this world. These Vasanas are of three types—viz. (a) 'Lok Vasana'—this is the desire and greed for wealth, fame, sensual objects, territorial gains, powers, majesty etc.; it also refers to the 'Vasanas' pertaining to the body vis-à-vis one's son, property and wealth which a person has acquired and enjoys, and the world around him—his relatives, his fame, his contacts, his friends, his obligation, contracts and responsibility; it also means to appease those who are related to him with this body. The

Vasanas relating to the world are the various attractions and allurements that his apparently enchanting and captivating world presents to a person. It also refers to the various and endless responsibilities and obligations, real and imaginary, that a person has, or imagines he has towards this world. (b) 'Shastra Vasana'—this is the desire and yearnings related to scriptures and literature, such as a desire to become expert in them and be recognised as such, to studying them more and more, acquiring scholarship, expertise and accompanying fame, good name and money through them, become much sought after and acquire a wide followership based on this expertise and oratory etc. But this is a futile exercise because the scriptures are vast and like a fathomless ocean, and trying to realise the Supreme Truth by delving into the depths of the scriptures is like extracting pearl by churning the ocean. Though it is theoretically possible, but practically it is impossible and too far fetched. Such people rely too much on the letter of the scriptures and do not understand or follow their spirit, engrossing themselves in endless doubts and debates which in turn lead to confusions and contradictions. It is rare to find an enlightened soul amongst worldly scholars and orators, for their erudition is limited to gaining fame and name and nothing more. (c) 'Deha Vasana'—this is the insatiable desire and passion related to the gratification of the sense organs, such as becoming licentious, engrossing oneself in enjoyment of worldly sensual objects, and all other types of indulgences and gratifications.

The concept of Vasanas has been elaborately explained by Lord Ram to Hanuman in canto 2.]

पूर्वोत्तरेषु विहिततत्तच्छान्तिपुरःसस्तु । वेदविद्याव्रतस्नातदेशिकस्य मुखात्स्वयम् ॥४१॥

गृहीत्वाऽष्टोत्तरशतं ये पठन्ति द्विजोत्तमाः । प्रारब्धक्षयपर्यन्तं जीवन्मुक्ता भवन्ति ते ॥४२॥

How to read/study the Upanishads:- To begin with, the wise seeker/aspirant should purify/cleanse himself with a bath and become self-restrained. He should hear the Upanishads from a self-realised teacher who is well-steeped in the knowledge of the Vedas, has already cleansed himself with a purification bath, and is also self-restrained as well as enlightened. The 'Shantipath' (or the Mantras invoking the supreme Brahman in general, and praying to the almighty and supreme Lord to bestow peace, wisdom, protection and success to the seeker/aspirant) should be recited in the beginning as well as at the end of each Upanishad.

Such a seeker/aspirant—who follows these principles while studying the Upanishads, tries to understand their real meaning, delves deep into their spirit and essence, and hears them being explained by a wise teacher as defined above (to eliminate his doubts, overcome his confusions and seek clarifications)—continues to live in this world with detachment and renunciation till the time all the accumulated results of his past deeds done in some previous life as well as the results of the deeds done during his present life are completely exhausted. In other words, such a man continues to live a life that is deemed to be equivalent to being liberated and delivered. Such a mentally free man is called 'Jivan Mukta'¹ or a person who is 'freed from the fetters that shackle a creature to this mundane and entrapping world as well as to its body'. (41-42).

[Note—¹The concept of *Mukti* has been elaborately explained by the Lord in canto 2 of this Upanishad. Basically *Mukti* is classified into two principle types—(a) Jivan Mukti, and (b) Videha Mukti.

The word Jivan means 'life' and Mukti means 'freedom and liberation'. A person who has the grand, noble, righteous and virtuous

characteristics as well as is enlightened and self-realised about the ultimate truth of this creation becomes totally detached from this artificial, mundane and illusionary world even while he physically lives in it, has a body, and goes about his routine duties and chores and does his assigned jobs in this world. But with erudition and truthful knowledge he has realised the futility of this world, and therefore he remains completely dispassionate and detached from it just like a dew drop lying on the petal of a lotus flower. He does not get the least agitated or affected or passionate by any set of circumstances, whether adverse or favourable. He remains aloof and unruffled. That is being equivalent to becoming free from all the mental, emotional and physical uneasiness created by the turmoil of this world. It is deemed that such a person has obtained virtual deliverance from the shackles of this entrapping world, a condition called 'being emancipated and delivered while still alive'; this phrase explains what constitutes Jivan Mukti.

The *Jivan Mukti* state refers to freedom from being mentally engrossed in this delusory and artificial world and becoming free from the shackles that tie a person to the cycle of transmigration in this world while he still physically lives in it and carries out his assigned and designated duties and works with dispassion and detachment. This enables the creature to be free from any mental bondage that tie it to the ensnaring world; it is tantamount to be liberated from the shackles of this world while still living in the world with a body and going about one's daily chores in a routine manner. After all, the very existence of the world is due to the mind; if the mind does not think that the world has any relevance, then it loses all pertinence and relevance for the creature.]

ततः_कालवशादेव_प्राग्बधे_तु_क्षयं_गते_।_वैदेहीं_मामकीं_मुक्तिं_यान्ति_नास्त्यत्र_संशयः_॥४३॥

Meanwhile, when all of the effects of their past deeds wear off in due course of time during which they would have lived an exemplary life of renunciation and detachment, studying the Upanishads and implementing their tenets in their lives thereby setting a precedent for others to emulate, they shed their mortal coil (i.e. they leave their body) and achieve that supreme stature called 'Videha Mukti'¹, i.e. freedom from the bondage of the physical gross body and its accompanying horrors and limitations; they find deliverance from the gross body and the gross world, and become subtle and sublime like their true identity known as their Atma (43).

[Note—¹The word Videha means one without a physical body. This state is obtained obviously when a person dies, for then his Atma or soul escapes from his body as Pran, the vital wind responsible for keeping the body alive and active. The Pran leaves the body in the form of 'breath'; and therefore, it is also treated as being synonymous with breath. Now, breath is 'air' with all its characteristic virtues and qualities. It is present everywhere, but it is neither visible nor felt unless it blows as a soft breeze when it is felt by its touch on the skin. So, in this case, the soul of a person who has become *Videha Mukti* is compared to this all-pervading but invisible wind or air which is the mainstay of life in the form of breath or 'Pran'. Consequentially, when a person dies, the breath easily moves out of the body without any trouble. Air as breath or Pran is not a dead entity but very much alive and active like the Atma or soul of the creature. When a person is freed from his body upon death, his Atma is liberated from the boundaries that are imposed upon it by the body. The Atma sets itself free and merges with the vast cosmos which is present outside the body even as the 'Pran' or breath present inside the body is liberated from it when it is exhaled and merges with the air present

outside the body. This is tantamount to having liberation without the encumbrance imposed by the body on the Atma of the creature.

Since the true identity of the creature is not his body but the Atma, in the case of *Videha Mukti*, this Atma or soul exits from the trapping of the body much like the breath going out from inside the body and finding liberation in the outside air. Even as the air does not perish after it leaves the body, the Atma which is the true identity of the creature also does not perish once it leaves the body and is set free.

The word *Videha* means without a body, and the word *Mukti* means liberation and freedom, emancipation and salvation. So loosely, the phrase ‘*Videha Mukti*’ means ‘freedom from the encumbrance and limitations of the body’. This *Videha Mukti*, generally speaking, is possible when the individual Atma, which is the truthful identity of the creature, leaves the body to merge with the cosmic Atma present outside the body of the individual creature. The example of the breath leaving the body is the best way to explain the concept. While the breath is inside the body, it represents the Atma of the individual because it is surrounded by the physical, gross body, but as soon as it is exhaled it becomes synonymous with being provided with *Videha Mukti* because it finds freedom from the encumbrances and limitations of the body and merges with the wind present in the vast space outside the body. So if a wise creature becomes totally unaware of his body so much so that he does not even feel the pain of a pin pricking it, when he is totally oblivious of the fact that the body even exists, then in that state of existence he is equivalent to having actually lost the body altogether — that is, the creature has obtained *Videha Mukti*. This state is usually achieved during meditation by Yogis when they enter ‘*Samadhi*’ which is a trance-like state of consciousness.

A truly liberated soul is one who has understood the import of these two types of *Muktis* and creates a synergy between the two. Such a person not only becomes ‘*Jivan Mukti*’, or freed from the burdens cast by this mundane world, but also attains ‘*Videha Mukti*’, or is freed from the encumbrances and limitations caused by the body at the same time. These two types of liberation and deliverance go hand in hand; they complement each other. The best example of a person having both these forms of *Muktis* simultaneously is the legendary king Janak (father of Sita and father-in-law of Lord Ram) because although he was a king taking care of the mundane work of the kingdom, internally he was completely detached from the world and is considered the most enlightened and wise king that ever existed. That is why he is also called ‘*Videha*’.

The concept of *Jivan Mukti* and *Videha Mukti* has been elaborately explained in *Mahopanishad*, canto 2, verse no.36-73 in the form of a spiritual dialogue between sage Shukreya and the wise king Janak, and canto 5 verse nos. 23-41 which describes the conversation between sage Ribhu and his enlightened disciple Nidagha. This great Upanishad is of the Sam Veda tradition and is included as chapter no. 9 of this humble author’s anthology of the Upanishads of this Veda published separately.]

सर्वोपनिषदां मध्ये सारमष्टोत्तरं शतम् । सकृच्छ्रवणमात्रेण सर्वाघौघनिकृन्तनम् ॥४४॥

Out of all the Upanishads available, these aforementioned one hundred eight Upanishads are like the essence or nectar of all of them taken together. By listening to them attentively even once, all the hoarded or accumulated sins and their denigrating effects are eliminated (44).

मयोपदिष्टं शिष्याय तुभ्यं पवननन्दन । इदं शास्त्रं मयादिष्टं गुह्यमष्टोत्तरं शतम् ॥४५॥

Oh the son of the Wind God (Hanuman)! You are my ardent and sincere disciple; hence I have described them for your benefit. The scriptures known as Upanishads mentioned by me are very secret (i.e. they are not easily accessible or comprehended by all) (45).

ज्ञानतोऽज्ञानतो वापि पठतां बन्धमोचकम् । राज्यं देयं धनं देयं याचतः कामपूरणम् ॥४६॥

इदमष्टोत्तरशतं न देयं यस्य कस्यचित् । नास्तिकाय कृतघ्नाय दुराचाररताय वै ॥४७॥

मद्भक्तिविमुखायापि शास्त्रगतेषु मुह्यते । गुरुभक्तिविहीनाय दातव्यं न कदाचन ॥४८॥

These scriptures are very effective in providing emancipation and salvation to the creature's soul so much so that whether they are read with eagerness and willingness, with concentration and intelligence, and with a sincere desire to acquire sublime and truthful knowledge and enlightenment, or they are read without paying much attention to them and not even comprehending what is being subtly said in these scriptures, or are read merely as a context or reference material—notwithstanding how these scriptures are read or heard, they can still bestow liberation from the shackles of this world and provide deliverance to the soul of the seeker.

You can give wealth or kingdom to anyone who wants them, but it is not proper to give (i.e. teach or make available) the Upanishads to all and sundry who are not worthy or eligible to receive them.

Who should not get it :- Verily, those who are non-believers and heretics, who are ungrateful and unthankful, who lack faith, belief and conviction, who are sinful, pervert and engrossed in misconduct and misdemeanours of all kinds, who do not have any devotion and faith in me and my words (i.e. those who are not interested in spiritualism, devotion, worship, self-realisation, deliverance from this world, emancipation and salvation of their soul, seeking enlightenment etc.), or those who have fallen in the pit of scriptural knowledge which is actually a sort of a trap for them (i.e. they just go by the letter of the scriptures without understanding their spirit, essence, meaning and aim; they do not put the tenets of the scriptures into practice in their lives and instead indulge in endless debates, oratory showmanship and exhibition of their literary scholarship)—such persons should never be given (i.e. taught, initiated into) the knowledge of the Upanishads (46-48).

सेवापराय शिष्याय हितपुत्राय मारुते । मद्भक्ताय सुशीलाय कुलीनाय सुमेधसे ॥४९॥

सम्यक् परीक्ष्य दातव्यमेवमष्टोत्तरं शतम् । यः पठेच्छृणुयाद्वापि स मामेति न संशयः ॥५०॥

Who should get it:- These one hundred eight Upanishads should be provided to a devoted and sincere disciple who is eager and diligent in serving his Guru, to an obedient son, to any of my devotees, to those born in a noble clan or a virtuous family, to those who are virtuous, humble and good-charactered, to those who are endowed with proper temperament and aptitude which are compatible with the acquisition of such knowledge, and those who have righteous demeanours and general auspicious temperament, but then only after duly examining them as to their eligibility for receiving these Holy Scriptures.

Such a person who reads or hears these Upanishads is able to attain me. [In other words, such a person is able to achieve the exalted stature when the Atma of that person becomes one with me who am the supreme transcendental Brahm personified. He becomes one like me, finds closeness with me, attains my divine abode and gets

the ultimate reward which is emancipation and salvation of his soul when he reads and understands these Upanishads.] There is no doubt about it (49-50).

— तदेतद्वचाभ्युक्तम्—विद्या ह वै ब्राह्मणमाजगाम गोपाय मा शेवधिष्टेहमस्मि । असूयकायानृजवे
— शठाय मा मा ब्रूया वीर्यवती तथा स्याम् । यमेव विद्याश्रुतमप्रमत्तं मेधाविनं ब्रह्मचर्योपपन्नम् ।
— तस्मा इमामुपसन्नाय सम्यक् परीक्ष्य दद्याद्वैष्णवीमात्मनिष्ठाम् ।। इति ।। ५१ ।।

This fact is also endorsed by the 'Richas' (the hymns of the Vedas). It is said that the body of knowledge of the Vedas once went to a Brahmin called Upanishad and said, 'Protect me, save me. I am your asset. Remember, don't ever narrate me to those who are unduly skeptic and critical, trying to find unnecessary faults with even sublime things, to those who are contemptible liars, imposters and deceitful, and those who are of a sinful, wicked, scheming, evil, pervert, decadent, licentious and treacherous temperament. It is only then that I shall become greatly potent, stupendously powerful and majestic in glory and renown; it is only then that I shall acquire immense strength and capability to become successful in achieving my goal of spreading the light of knowledge, enlightenment and wisdom leading to the emancipation, salvation and bliss to the creature'.

He whom the teacher finds eager, sincere, honest and diligent in study of the scriptures, imbuing their holistic knowledge and practicing their tenets, who has none of the bad habits such as indulgence and indolence, he who is scholarly, and has the aptitude and potential to study the scriptures, and he who observes self-restraint, abstinence, celibacy and continence— only when such a seeker/aspirant approaches a teacher should he be imparted a comprehensive spiritual knowledge about the pure-self which is synonymous with the supreme conscious Atma, which in turn is an image of the supreme Brahm or Parmatma. This holistic knowledge is called 'Vaishnavi Vidya', or the sublime and holistic knowledge that pertains to the Atma as a manifestation of the supreme Brahm. But prior to this, the teacher should subject the disciple to proper test of eligibility and aptitude to determine his worthiness for acquiring the Upanishads'. This is what Sri Ram told Hanuman. (51).

अथ हैनं श्रीरामचन्द्रं मारुतिः पप्रच्छ ऋग्वेदादिविभागेन पृथक् शान्तिमनुबुहीति ।। ५२ ।।

Classification of the Upanishads:- After that, Hanuman asked Sri Ram, 'Oh Lord! Please classify the Upanishads according to the Vedas they belong to, such as the Rig Veda, and also enlighten me about their respective 'Shanti Paaths'. [These Shanti Paths are invocational prayers asking the supreme transcendental Lord to bestow peace and bliss upon the person who does the prayer. These essentially seek the Lord's blessings and benediction, and request the Supreme Being to inculcate noble virtues and values in the aspirant who studies the Upanishads so that the real benefit of their study is obtained by him.] (52).

स होवाच श्रीरामः । एतरेयकौषीतकीनादबिन्दात्मप्रबोधनिर्वाणमुद्रलाक्षमालिकात्रिपुरा—
सौभाग्यबह्वचानामृग्वेदगतानां दशसंख्याकानामुपनिषदां वाङ्मे मनसीति शान्तिः ।। ५३ ।।

Sri Ram replied, 'There are ten Upanishads in the Rig Veda, and their 'Shanti Mantra' is 'Vaang Me Manasi'.

These ten Upanishads are the following— (1) Aiteriya, (2) Kaushitaki-brahmin, (3) Naadbindu, (4) Atmaprabodh, (5) Nirvaan, (6) Mudgal, (7) Akshamalika, (8) Tripura, (9) Saubhgya-laxmi, and (10) Bhavarich.

The Shanti Mantra (or Paath) of the Rig Vedic Upanishads is the following :-

ॐ वाङ् मे मनसि प्रतिष्ठिता मनो मे वाचि प्रतिष्ठितमाविरावीर्म एधि । वेदस्य म
 आणीस्थः श्रुतं मे मा प्रहासीः । अनेनाधीतेनाहोरात्रान्सन्दधाम्यृतं वदिष्यामि ।
 सत्यं वदिष्यामि । तन्मामवतु । तद्वक्तारमवतु । अवतु मामवतु वक्तारमवतु वक्तारम् ॥
 ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ॥

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is as follows:-‘OM salutations! Oh supreme Lord! Let my speech and my mind be one and in harmony with each other (i.e. let my speech say what I think; let me not be deceitful, cunning, imposturous and treacherous; let me not speak and think differently). Oh Lord! Present yourself before me (i.e. remove all the delusions and the darkness of ignorance which have engulfed me from all the sides so that I can see through the darkness as well as the deluding mist, and view your splendorous form, experience the bliss of your presence). Empower me so that I can acquire the knowledge and wisdom enunciated by the Vedas while not forgetting that which has been already acquired. Let my self-study about the true nature and the essences of the absolute reality that the Brahm is continue uninterrupted, unhindered day and night. I should speak what is good and noble (i.e. I should never indulge in false gossip, cursing, swearing, utter expletives, tattle, criticise others etc.) as well as the truth (i.e. I should never indulge in deceitful talk and falsehood). Let the supreme Brahm protect me. Let the supreme Brahm protect my teacher. Let all the three types of torments that afflict me be calmed down. [The so-called three ‘Traitaps’ are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age; due to other worldly creatures such as fear from the king, thieves etc.; due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods.] Let us have peace. Let us have peace. Let us have peace.’ (53).

ईशावास्यबृहदारण्यजाबालहंसपरमहंससुबालमन्त्रिकानिरालम्बत्रिशिखीब्राह्मणमण्डलब्राह्मणा—
 द्वयतारकपैङ्गलभिक्षुतुरीयातीताध्यात्मतारसारयाज्ञवल्क्यशाट्यायनीमुक्तिकानां—
 शुक्लयजुर्वेदगतानामेकोनविंशतिसंख्याकानामुपनिषदां पूर्णमद इति शान्तिः ॥५४॥

Similarly, there are nineteen Upanishads in the Shukla (white) Yajur Veda, and their ‘Shanti Mantra’ is ‘Purna-madha Purna-midam’.

These nineteen Upanishads are the following— (1) Ishavasya, (2) Brihadaranyak, (3) Jabal, (4) Hansa, (5) Paramhansa, (6) Subal, (7) Mantrika, (8) Niraalamb, (9) Trishikhi-brahmin, (10) Mandal-brahmin, (11) Adwye-tarak, (12) Paingal, (13) Bhikshuk, (14) Turiyateet, (15) Adhyatma, (16) Tarsar, (17) Yagyawalkya, (18) Shatyayani, and (19) Muktika.

The Shantipaath of the Shukla Yajur Vedic Upanishads is the following :-

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
 ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ॥

The Shanti Paath has the following meaning:-‘OM salutations! The supreme Lord who is represented by the cosmic divine word symbol OM is complete and absolute in all respects. This whole cosmos is wholly and completely encompassed and pervaded by him (i.e. the supreme Brahm pervades this whole creation even as water is uniformly present in wet sponge). This whole world, in its myriad forms, has

originated from that whole, complete and indivisible entity. In spite of this, that whole, complete and indivisible entity (Brahm) remains as such, that is, whole, complete and indivisible. Even when he is hypothetically separated from this creation, he still remains whole, complete and indivisible. [That is, Brahm cannot be partitioned or fractured or divided in any way. Whether he is treated as a separate entity or as an integral part of the cosmos, his form and nature remains essentially the same; he is unique in this aspect. This is a reference to the non-dual nature of the supreme Brahm.] OM! Let our three torments be calmed down. [The so-called three 'Traitaps' are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age; due to other worldly creatures such as fear from the king, thieves etc.; due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods.] Let us have peace. Let us have peace. Let us have peace.' (54).

कठवल्लीतैत्तिरीयकब्रह्मकैवल्यश्चेताश्चतरगर्भनारायणामृतबिन्दुमृतनादकालाग्निरुद्रक्षुरिकासर्वसार—
शुकरहस्यतेजोबिन्दुध्यानबिन्दुब्रह्मविद्यायोगतत्त्वदक्षिणामूर्तिस्कन्दशारीरकयोगशिखैकाक्षराक्षयधूत—
कठरुद्रहृदययोगकुण्डलिनीपञ्चब्रह्मप्राणाग्निहोत्रवराहकलिसन्तरणसरस्वतीरहस्यामां—
कृष्णयजुर्वेदगतानां द्वात्रिंशत्संख्याकानामुपनिषदां स ह नाववत्त्विति शान्तिः ॥५५॥

Again, there are thirty two Upanishads in the Krishna (dark) Yajur Veda, and their 'Shanti Mantra' is 'Saha Navavatu Saha Nau Bhunaktu'.

These thirty two Upanishads are the following— (1) Kathvalli, (2) Taitiriya, (3) Brahm, (4) Kaivalya, (5) Shwetashwatar, (6) Garbha, (7) Narain, (8) Amrit-bindu, (9) Amrit-naad, (10) Kalagni-rudra, (11) Kshurika, (12) Sarvasar, (13) Shukarhasya, (14) Tejobindu, (15) Dhyandindu, (16) Brahmvidya, (17) Yogtattva, (18) Dakshinamurti, (19) Skand, (20) Sharirak, (21) Yogshikha, (22) Ekakshar, (23) Akshi, (24) Avadhut, (25) Kath-rudra, (26) Rudra-hridya, (27) Yogkundali, (28) Panch-brahm, (29) Pranagnihotra, (30) Varah, (31) Kalisantaran and (32) Saraswati-rahasya.

The Shantipaath of the Krishna Yajur Vedic Upanishads is the following :-

ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।
ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ॥

The Shanti Paath has the following meaning:- 'OM salutations! Oh the supreme, absolute Brahm who is an embodiment of the divine cosmic sound OM! Protect both of us— the Guru (teacher) as well as the disciple— together. Give us your patronage and sustain us (i.e. take care of our welfare and well-being). Let us together gain in strength. Let the glorious knowledge that we both acquire become glittering and splendorous as well as permanent, sound and unchallengeable so that no one can supersede us in our wisdom and knowledge. Let us be at peace with each other (i.e. we should not have any kind of jealousy, malice, envy, hatred etc. against each other). Let all our three so-called 'Traitaps' be calmed down. [The so-called three 'Traitaps' are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age; due to other worldly creatures such as fear from the king, thieves etc.; due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods.] Let us have peace. Let us have peace. Let us have peace.' (55).

केनच्छान्दोग्यारुणिमैत्रायणिमैत्रेयीवज्रसूचिकायोगचूडामणिवासुदेवमहत्संन्यासाव्यक्तकुण्डिका—

सावित्रीरुद्राक्षजाबालदर्शनजाबालीनां_ सामवेदगतानां_ षोडशसंख्याकानामुपनिषदामाप्यायन्त्विति_ शान्तिः_ ॥५६॥

Sam Veda has sixteen Upanishads, and their 'Shanti Mantra' is 'Apyayantu Mamangani'.

These sixteen Upanishads are the following— (1) Ken, (2) Chandogya, (3) Arunik, (4) Maitrayani, (5) Maitreye, (6) Vajrasuchika, (7) Yogchudamani, (8) Vasudeo, (9) Mahat, (10) Sanyas, (11) Avyakta, (12) Kundika, (13) Savitri, (14) Rudraksha-jabal, (15) Jabal-darshan, and (16) Jabali.

The Shantipaath of the Sam Vedic Upanishads is the following :-

ॐ आप्यायन्तु ममाङ्गानि वाक् प्राणश्चक्षुः श्रोत्रमथो बलमिन्द्रियाणि च सर्वाणि ।
सर्वं ब्रह्मौपनिषदं माहं ब्रह्म निराकुर्या मा मा ब्रह्म निराकरोत् अनिराकरणमस्त्वनिराकरणं
मेऽस्तु । तदात्मनि निरते य उपनिषत्सु धर्मास्ते मयि सन्तु ते मयि सन्तु ॥
ॐ शान्तिः ! शान्तिः ! शान्तिः !!!

The Shanti Paath has the following meaning:- 'OM salutations! Oh supreme Lord! Let all my sense organs of perception such as speech, eyes, ears etc. as well as the parts of my body which are called the organs of action (such as hands, legs etc.), all the 'Prans' (the vital forces of life) as well as the strength and powers of my body and the mind-intellect apparatus, my overall vitality, vigour and prowess as well as glory and fame become progressively more robust, be enhanced and attain more exalted stature than what they are at present. Let that Brahm who has been described and defined by the Upanishads never forsake me, and at the same time, let me never deny him. Brahm should always treat me as his one of his own, and let the mutual relationship that is already established between the two of us become sound and eternal, constant and consistent. Let all those auspicious virtues, noble qualities and exemplary characteristic features which are collectively called 'Dharma' (i.e. righteousness, probity, propriety) by the Upanishads always and constantly shine and illuminate my inner-self. Let me regularly, persistently and consistently pursue the supreme Brahm as the only target or goal of my life (i.e. let me concentrate on and divert all my energy and activities in this world exclusively towards a single Utopian goal—and that is, attainment or realisation of the supreme Brahm). Let all my three torments be calmed down. [The so-called three 'Traitaps' are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age; due to other worldly creatures such as fear from the king, thieves etc.; due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods.] Let us have peace. Let us have peace. Let us have peace.' (56).

प्रश्नमुण्डकमाण्डूक्याथर्वशिरोऽथर्वशिखाबृहज्जाबालनृसिंहतापनीनारदपरिव्राजकसीता
शरभमहानारायणरामरहस्यरामतापनीशाडिल्यपरमहंसपरिव्राजकान्नपूर्णासूर्यात्मपाशुपतपरब्रह्म
त्रिपुरातपनदेवीभावनाब्रह्मजाबालगणपतिमहावाक्यगोपालतपनकृष्णहयग्रीवदत्तात्रेयगारुडानामथर्ववे—
दगतानामेकत्रिंशत्संख्याकानामुपनिषदां भद्रं कर्णेभिरिति शान्तिः ॥५७॥

Similarly, there are thirty one Upanishads in the Atharva Veda, and their 'Shanti Mantra' is 'Bhadrum Karnevhi Srinuyam'.

These thirty one Upanishads are the following— (1) Prashna, (2) Mundak, (3) Mandukya, (4) Atharvashiras, (5) Atharva-shikha, (6) Brihajjabal, (7) Nrisinghtapini, (8) Narad-parivrajak, (9) Sita, (10) Sharabh, (11) Tripadvibhuti-mahanarayan, (12) Ramrahsya, (13)

Ramtapini, (14) Shandilya, (15) Paramhansa-parivrajak, (16) Annapurna, (17) Surya, (18) Atma, (19) Pashupat, (20) Par-Brahm, (21) Tripura-tapini, (22) Devi, (23) Bhavana, (24) Bhasma-jabal, (25) Ganapati, (26) Mahavakya, (27) Gopal-tapini, (28) Krishna, (29) Haigriv, (30) Dattatreya and (31) Garud.

The Shantipaath of the Atharva Vedic Upanishads is the following

:-

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
 स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवाँसस्तनूभिर्व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ।।
 स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।
 स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ।।
 ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ।

The Shanti Paath has the following meaning;—‘OM salutations! The disciples who are studying the scriptures at the place of their Guru (teacher, moral preceptor, guide) remember the Gods and pray to them for the welfare and good of their teacher, their fellow students as well as the human race as a whole— ‘Oh Gods! Let us hear auspicious and noble things with our ears. Criticism of others, finding faults with them, useless gossip, cynicism, cursing and use of foul as well as abusive language, profanities, expletives and all other types of non-righteous, uncultured, uncivilised and unwarranted sinful words should not enter our ears. Let our lives be devoted to and focused on the Lord God! Let us spend our time in his worship and honour. Not only the ears, but let our eyes too see good things only. Let not our eyes be ever attracted towards or enchanted by any sight or scene that is inauspicious, unrighteous, un-virtuous, detestable, abhorable, corruptible and degrading, perverting or depraving for the mind-heart-intellect complex. In short, let our views and sights be pure. Let our body, every part of it, be able, strong and healthy so that we can be fit enough to praise, worship, honour, serve and revere the Lord God (because an unfit, diseased and decrepit body is a great burden and hindrance in life of the seeker/aspirant). Let our age and life not be spent in the gratification of the sense organs or enjoyment of the materialistic world, or be frittered away in indolence and lethargy. Our lives should be used for the work of the Lord God (i.e. we can do righteous deeds of all kinds). They whose fame is spread in all the directions, i.e. the king of Gods named Indra, the all-knowing Purush (i.e. the supreme Lord), the legendary bird who can eliminate/remove all sorrows, miseries, distresses, troubles and tribulations of all kinds (i.e. Garud, the legendary eagle/heron who is the mount of Lord Vishnu), as well as the Lord of wisdom and intelligence, Lord Brishpati—all of them are the various manifestations and extension of the Lord’s excellence, majesty, magnificent glories, stupendous powers and supreme dignity. Let them all sustain, enhance and nourish all that which is good for us. Their grace and kindness will give well-being and auspiciousness to all the creatures including us. Let all the torments pertaining to this existence be calmed down. [The so-called three ‘Traitaps’ are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age; due to other worldly creatures such as fear from the king, thieves etc.; due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods.] Let us have peace. Let us have peace. Let us have peace.’ (57).

मुमुक्षवः पुरुषाः साधनचतुष्टयसंपन्नाः श्रद्धावन्तः सुकुलभवं श्रोत्रियं शास्त्रवात्सल्यगुणवन्तमकुटिलं
 सर्वभूतहिते रतं दयासमुदं सद्गुरुं विधिवदुपसंगम्योपहारपाणयोऽष्टोत्तरशतोपनिषदं विधिवदधीत्य
 श्रवणमनननिदिध्यासनानि नैरन्तर्येण कृत्वा प्रारब्धक्षयादेहत्रयभङ्गं प्राप्योपाधिविनिर्मुक्तं—

घटाकाशवत्परिपूर्णा_विदेहमुक्तिः_।_सैव_कैवल्यमुक्तिरिति_।_अत_एव_ब्रह्मलोकस्था_—
अपि_ब्रह्ममुखाद्वेदान्तश्रवणादि_कृत्वा_तेन_सह_कैवल्यं_लभन्ते_।_अतः_सर्वेषां_—
कैवल्यमुक्तिर्ज्ञानमात्रेणोक्ता_।_न_कर्मसांख्ययोगोपासनादिभिरित्युपमिषत्_॥५८॥

इति मुक्तिकोपनिषत्सु प्रथमोऽध्यायः ॥

Those who aspire for emancipation and salvation of their soul, are able to distinguish between what is eternal and what is perishable, are not interested either in the enjoyment and pleasures of the objects of this materialistic world or those of the heaven, are blessed with the virtues of ‘Sham and Dam’ (i.e. the qualities of self-restraint and tolerance), are eager and sincere for salvation, and have faith and conviction in the sublime, holy and divine tenets of these Upanishads— such aspirants should approach a ‘Sud Guru’ (i.e. a worthy teacher who is competent to teach the knowledge of the Upanishads). The qualities of such a teacher are the following— he should be born in an exalted and virtuous clan, he should himself be well-versed and steeped in the divine knowledge enshrined in the Vedas, he should have sincere interest and deep love for the scriptures, he should possess all the good qualities, values and virtues (such as righteousness, noble thoughts and actions, truthfulness, honesty, humility, simplicity, clarity of thought and firmness of conviction in the truthfulness of the tenets of the scriptures, etc.), he should be of a simple, saintly and pious heart, temperament and demeanours, he should be constantly and diligently involved in the welfare of all the creatures, he should believe in altruism, sacrifice and benevolence, and he should be an ocean of kindness, mercy and compassion.

The seeker/aspirant/disciple should take some offering as gift for his teacher, and after having studied the one hundred and eight Upanishads from him, he should henceforth constantly read, study, discuss, contemplate upon and practice those scriptures in his life (i.e. the tenets that are proclaimed by the Upanishads should be put into practice by the aspirant). Then, by and by, when all the accumulated effects of all the past deeds done by the aspirant get exhausted and he becomes free from all encumbrances associated with this body consisting of the three hypothetical divisions (i.e. the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body), he attains the final liberation which is much sought after. In other words, he breaks free from the fetters that shackle the creature to the gross body, and to the world through the body, as a result of which he becomes similar to the wind element called the Ghataakash which is present inside the earthen pot, and which gets released to the outer space when that pot breaks open.

When the limitations of the body are removed, and when the soul escapes as the vital wind element from the body, the creature finds fulfillment and cycle of liberation and deliverance is complete. This is called ‘Videha Mukti’ (i.e. the final liberation when the encumbrances imposed by the gross body are removed, and the Atma in the form of Pran is able to get out of the body when the person dies and is released into the outer space to merge with the infinite wind or air element present in the vast cosmos; this is tantamount to the Atma merging with its primary source, the Brahm. This is true emancipation and salvation without the encumbrance of the gross body of the creature).

This form of liberation and deliverance is also called ‘Kaivalya Mukti’ because it is unique and one of its kind in the sense that from this state there is no return to the cycle of birth and death. ‘Kaivalya Mukti’ is that form of liberation wherein the Atma or soul of the creature merges with its primary source called the Brahm. This Brahm is the macrocosmic counterpart of the microcosmic soul of the

creature. The word ‘Kaivalya’ indicates that this is the only salvation worth aiming for, as it is the best form of salvation to aspire for by an enlightened and wise man¹. Even those who reside in the mortal world created by Brahma get their ultimate resting place with the supreme Brahm, called Kaivalya Mukti, by following the guidelines as enunciated by the Upanishads. It is achieved by hearing them attentively, pondering upon them and their meaning and message, and contemplating upon their subtle essence as well as putting into practice the doctrines enshrined in them.

Therefore, it is only through pursuing the path of ‘Gyan’ (i.e. acquisition of the essential and truthful knowledge pertaining to the absolute Reality and irrefutable supreme Truth in this creation through the study of the Upanishads; obtaining knowledge of the Atma and its relationship with the supreme transcendental Brahm; the true and fundamental nature of this Atma and Brahm) that Kaivalya Mukti described above is attainable or made possible for a sincere aspirant— not by other methods such as ‘Karma Yog’ (i.e. by following the doctrine of ‘doing deeds’, such as doing righteous deeds which help to purge the accumulated evil effects of the past actions, and offering all the present actions to the Lord so that no new effects are generated to bog down the creature’s spiritual progress in the future), ‘Sankhya Yog’ (i.e. one of the six schools of Hindu philosophy propounded by sage Kapil), and ‘Upasana’ (i.e. worship, adoration, prayer, paying homage, doing service, having devotion, seeking intercession of the chosen deity), etc. This is an Upanishad (hence, it cannot tell a lie)’ (58).

[Note—Once the vital wind known as the Pran which is trapped inside the body is released into the outer space, it is impossible to segregate it and relocate it within the confines of a gross body. In other words, the liberation is complete and irrevocable. The Pran is also synonymous with the vital wind force of life that sustains life and provides vitality to the creature. At the time of death, the Pran comes out of the body and merges with the open space outside. Earlier it was trapped inside the body, but now it is freed like a bird released from its cage. This is truthful liberation and deliverance from all the torments and horrors that the creature has had to suffer due the body and its interaction with the world.

From the point of view of the Atma, which is the pure conscious ‘self’ of the creature, the removal of the three types of veils or sheaths or coverings that surround it is also tantamount to its liberation. These three sheaths are called the food-air sheath pertaining to the gross body, the mind-intellect sheath pertaining to the subtle body, and the bliss sheath pertaining to the causal body. When the wise and enlightened seeker dies, his Atma is deemed to be released from these encircling girdles just like a prisoner being released from the prison and set free in the wide world outside. Freedom gives it immense happiness and bliss. These virtues are associated with Brahm realisation, and when the Atma attains these auspicious virtues it is deemed to have attained Brahm. When all the barriers are removed, the Atma becomes one with the supreme transcendental Brahm which is incidentally its original and primary source.

The main objective of verse no. 58 is to concentrate the mind on the supreme truth or reality which is pure consciousness residing in the heart or bosom of the seeker. The mind which controls the food sheath (i.e. sense organs) is full of agitation, restlessness and flux. It has to be controlled and guided by the intellect. So, the first step is to control and withdraw the mind from all external distractions of this world. This can be done by three means—(i) *The Path of Karma*, or doing assigned duties

without being attached to them; (ii) *The Path of Devotion or Worship* and (iii) *The Path of Knowledge*. It is the third path which is being referred to in this verse. By introspection, contemplation and deeply pondering over the matter and acquisition of truthful knowledge, we are able to distinguish and discriminate between what is true and pure, and what is falsehood, illusionary and corrupted. It helps us to eliminate all the unscrupulous activities and clutter, and instead divert our attention inwards. Taken differently, we can witness the divine, pure, self illuminated spark of consciousness present in a dormant form in all of us by the following method—the Atma manifests itself through the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. The gross body (sense organs) can be willfully controlled by the mind under the overall guidance of the intellect; the subtle body can be controlled by discrimination and proper, truthful knowledge. The causal body on the other hand, can be controlled by the integration and coordination of the subjective and objective mind. When all the three are controlled, the Vasanas and/or Vrittis (inherent worldly passions and desires as well as natural tendencies and temperaments) clouding the Atma vanish (i.e. they are eliminated for good). This results in the pure consciousness shining through the whole existence of the creature.]

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Canto-2

The nature and essence of ‘freedom from life and freedom from body’;
Their proof; The means to achieve them; Their aim/objective

तथा हैनं श्रीरामचन्द्रं मारुतिः पप्रच्छ । केयं वा तत्सिद्धिः सिध्या वा किं प्रयोजनमिति ॥१॥

Hanuman asked Sri Ram once again, 'Oh Lord! What is 'Jivan Mukti' and 'Videha Mukti', what is their proof, how are they achieved, and what are their uses, aims and objectives?' (1).

स होवाच श्रीरामः । पुरुषस्य कर्तृत्वभोक्तृत्वसुखदुःखादिलक्षणश्चित्तधर्मः क्लेशरूपत्वाद्बन्धो
भवति । तन्निरोधनं जीवन्मुक्तिः । उपाधिविनिर्मुक्तघटाकाशवत्प्रारब्धक्षयाद्विदेहमुक्तिः ।
जीवन्मुक्तिविदेहमुक्त्योरष्टोत्तरशतोपनिषदः प्रमाणम् । कर्तृत्वादिदुःखनिवृत्तिङ्कारा
नित्यानन्दावाप्तिः प्रयोजनं भवति । तत्पुरुषप्रयत्नसाध्यं भवति । यथा पुत्रकामेष्टिना पुत्रं
वाणिज्यादिना वित्तं ज्योतिष्टोमेन स्वर्गं तथा पुरुषप्रयत्नसाध्यवेदान्तश्रवणादिजनितसमाधिना
जीवन्मुक्त्यादिलाभो भवति । सर्ववासनाक्षयात्तल्लभः ॥२॥

Sri Ram replied, 'Oh Hanuman! The erroneous thoughts and beliefs of the creature that 'it is the enjoyer or a sufferer, that it is a doer of deeds, that it is happy or sad as a result of his deeds' are all due to its mind. It is the mislead mind that makes the creature think and belief in this way. This erroneous knowledge or belief (that the creature is the one who suffers, who enjoys, who does any thing) is at the root of all its troubles, miseries and torments in this world; it shackles the creature to the world. The elimination or purging of this fallacious and misleading belief and its accompanying sorrows is tantamount to 'Jivan Mukti'¹ (i.e. being freed from the fetters that tie the creature to this illusionary and deluding world while he is still alive in it. In other words, when the creature rids itself from the wrong conception that it is the one who suffers and enjoys anything in this world, and that it is the one who does anything at all, then the creature finds perpetual peace. This is because the creature

then would have realised the fact that it is the body, and not the Atma which is the truthful identity of the creature, that does any deed and therefore it is the body, and not the Atma, that suffers or enjoys the results of the deeds.)

When the Atma of the creature cracks through the shell surrounding it, the former merges with the infinite space around it. That is, when the Atma leaves the body at the time of death of the creature and escapes from its limiting boundaries to merge with the vast and infinite space outside—the space which symbolically represents the eternal, infinite and fathomless Brahm—it is deemed to become one with Brahm. Such liberation of the soul is called ‘Videha Mukti’² (literally a liberation that removes the encumbrances and limitations imposed by the body upon the creature. This is the ultimate emancipation and salvation of the soul when the body housing the creature is discarded and the soul becomes free from its captivity and finds its residence with its primary source, the supreme transcendental Brahm).

The situation can be compared to the space within a pitcher. When the pitcher is broken, the space inside the pitcher merges inseparably and indistinguishably with the space outside the pitcher. [In this example, the Atma is the space inside the pitcher, while the space outside is the Brahm, and the body is the shell or body of the pitcher. When the creature dies, the Pran, or the vital winds that sustain life in the creature, leave the body and the creature is declared dead. But according to Upanishadic philosophy, the creature simply makes its exit from the prison of the body and becomes free as a bird. This is because the truthful identity of the creature is its Atma and not its body that has died.]

The 108 Upanishads are the authentic proof that the two types of ‘Muktis’ (i.e. deliverance, liberation, emancipation and salvation of the soul)— viz. the Jivan Mukti and the Videha Mukti— do exist. That is, their existence is endorsed and proclaimed by the Upanishads.

The main objective of their teachings is to help the creature to obtain perpetual bliss, tranquility, peace, contentedness and happiness by eliminating all the sorrows and anguish, all the torments and pains that are associated with false beliefs and erroneous thinking that the creature is the ‘doer of deeds’ and ‘it suffers because of those deeds’.

The Muktis are achievable by diligent industry and sincere effort, as well as by perseverance and inculcating correct wisdom and knowledge. One should shun misconceptions and hearsay.

Even as a son is begot by doing a son-begetting fire sacrifice called ‘Putresthi Yagya’, wealth, prosperity and material well being are generated by commerce and trade, and heavenly abode is achieved by doing the ‘Jyotisthom Yagya’, one can achieve Jivan Mukti as well as Videha Mukti through the process of ‘Samadhi’³ (i.e. a meditative trance-like state where the creature becomes unaware of the surrounding world and realises the glory and illumination of the Atma shining inside him, leading to bliss and ecstasy). This ‘Samadhi’ is possible by inculcating the tenets of the Upanishads in daily life, practicing them rigorously and consistently with firm belief, faith and conviction. This is made possible by attentively hearing, reading and contemplating upon the great and eternal truths propounded by the Upanishads. Further, it is accomplished when all the Vasanas present inside the creature are eliminated, purged and destroyed. [The word Vasana means— various desires, allurements, yearnings, greed, passions, infatuations, attachments, and such other inherent inclinations and temperaments of the creature that tend to bind him to this illusionary and deluding materialistic world.] (2).

[Note :-(i) *Moksha and Mukti*—They refer to a creature's liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle it to this mundane, artificial and entrapping world conceived by Maya, or the fetters that arises out of its own delusions pertaining to this world. This freedom leads to emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature. It is not dependent so much on deeds done by a creature as it is on remaining detached from these deeds and their results, which is a difficult proposition. This is not possible unless one realises that one's true self is the Atma and not the body. This is where people with faulty conception stumble. They forget that the very notion that 'I am doing deeds' is directly related to the creature having awareness of one's body, because deeds are done by the body. If one is unaware of the body, then there is no question of even being aware of whether the deed is done or not. Incidentally, this unawareness of the existence of the body while doing deeds is what is known as 'Samadhi' wherein the aspirant goes about his normal routing work without being aware of what is happening.

These two words are synonymous with each other. They both mean, put simply, 'liberation and deliverance'. For example, when a person is in a difficult situation, he yearns for freedom from his torments, and once he gets it, he says that he has got Mukti or liberation from his torments, that is, he is delivered from a hellish situation.

In spiritual realm, Moksha/Mukti has different connotations for the two main schools of Hindu philosophy— the Advaitya and the Dvaitya. The Advaitya school of thought, as the name suggests, means 'non-duality' while Dvaitya means 'duality'. The Advaitya school's belief, *inter alia*, is that the soul of the creature is one with the supreme Soul called Brahman. This is an eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent absolute entity. It is the ultimate truth and reality. Hence, Mukti in this context means the individual soul of the creature breaking free or being 'liberated' from the endless cycle of birth and death, and it getting 'delivered' from its temporary abode in the physical body of the creature. It being 'emancipated' means that its disability to break free has been overcome and it has been finally liberated, but this liberation or emancipation must logically end in the 'salvation' of the creature which means merging of the liberated soul with its primary source which is the Brahman. It is like pouring the cup of water back into the ocean. The main exponent of this philosophy was Sankaracharya.

The Dvaitya school believes in duality, i.e. that the supreme Lord (God) and the Jiva (creature) are two separate entities. For this school, there are four types of Muktis, viz (i) *Salokya* which refers to finding an abode in the supreme divine abode of the chosen deity of the seeker; (ii) *Sayujya* which refers to become one with the Lord; to merge one's own identity with the Lord so that one becomes inseparable from his Lord; this form of salvation is very similar to the one that comes under the definition of *Kaivalya*; it is also called the 'Param Pad' or supreme state of being one with the Lord. (iii) *Samipya* which refers to being able to reside near the Lord to serve him; and (iv) *Kaivalya* meaning 'the only one of its kind', thereby implying that there is no other forms of Mukti except the one when the Atma abandons the gross body which is like a shackle for it, and then inseparably and indistinguishably merging with the supreme transcendental Soul of the cosmos. This is the eclectic and holistic form of Mukti extolled by the Upanishads. This Mukti means the dissolution or merger of the individual soul with the parent supreme Soul. The realisation that the soul of the individual creature is the same as the cosmic Soul residing in all the creatures of this world, to see the

supreme Brahm as a resident of the inner-self of the individual creature as its Atma, and identifying oneself with that Atma which is synonymous with that supreme Brahm, which in turn leads to the recognition of non-dual nature of the soul of the creature and the supreme Soul of the cosmos, realising therefore that there is no notion as 'duality' when dealing with divinity and the supreme transcendental being called 'Brahm' vis-à-vis the creature, and other such basic tenets of Vedanta are the foundation upon which Kaivalya Mukti rests. According to Yoga Upanishads, Kaivalya Mukti is achieved even when the creature is alive because it primarily involves total realisation and disassociation from the body and the world with which it has to interact. When the seeker dies, he simply abandons his mortal coil, the gross body consisting of the different sense organs, and merges his Pran or the Atma with the macrocosm outside. Since the word 'Kaivalya' means 'the only', this form of Mukti refers to the realisation of the one and the only spiritual Truth which is the absolute and irrefutable Reality in creation.

Since the Advaitya school believes in only one end of the soul— its merger with the parent Soul—they emphasis 'Kaivalya Mukti' as the only form of salvation and emancipation. The word Kaivalya itself means 'only'.

The path to emancipation and salvation according to the Dvaitya school is through the medium of various mediation techniques such as— (i) Japa (repetition of the holy name of a chosen God), (ii) Huta (offering of rituals and sacrifices), (iii) Archana (roughly meaning worship and service), (iv) Puja (meaning adoration and worship of the chosen deity) and (v) Dhyān (concentrating on the various forms, activities and glorious stories associated with the deity). For the Advaitya School, meditation emphasises control of the functions of the body through various exercises, restraints and concentrations, a process called Yoga.

Contemplation in the end, in both the cases, makes the seeker/aspirant realise the futility of the world and kindles in him an intense desire to search out the ultimate Truth and Reality. The Upanishads here act as a referee and guide. They advise the seeker/aspirant about the goal of life. What one contemplates with intensity is what one becomes. So, if one contemplates seriously on the 'Truth', he verily becomes the truth personified, and if he contemplates on the 'False', he verily becomes false himself.

The concept of 'deliverance' has been encapsulated in the epic Mahabharat in these words:-- Who gets deliverance

सुखदुःखो_समे_यस्य_लाभालाभौ_जयाजयौ ।_इच्छाद्वेगौ_भयाद्वेगौ_सर्वथा_मुक्त_एव_सः॥
वलीपलितसंयोगे_काश्यं_वैवर्ण्यमेव_च ।_कुब्जभावं_च_जरया_यः_पश्यति_स_मुच्यते ॥
पुंस्त्वोपघातं_कालेन_दर्शनोपरमं_तथा ।_बाधिर्यं_प्राणमन्दत्वं_यः_पश्यति_स_मुच्यते ॥

----- (महा० शान्ति० २८८/३७, ३९-४०) -----

He who is unmoved by and treats joys and happiness as well as sorrows, miseries, troubles and misfortunes, gains as well as losses, victories as well as defeats equally, with equanimity and fortitude, whose desires, envies, ill-wills, hatreds, fears and agitations have been completely vanquished or eliminated—is the one who is truly liberated. When old age comes, the body develops wrinkles, becomes lean and decrepit, the hairs change colour to grey, the general appearance loses its sheen and attractiveness while the back tends to bend—one who constantly remains aware of these facts is truly liberated. When the time comes, manliness declines, eyesight fails, the ears do not hear and the vital forces of life becomes weak and on the verge of collapse—one who

is always aware these thing is truly liberated. (Mahabrt, Shanit Parva, 288/37, 39-40)

The concept of Mukti has been classified into two principle types— (a) Jivan Mukti, and (b) Videha Mukti.

¹The word *Jivan* means ‘life’ and *Mukti* means ‘freedom and liberation’. A person who has the grand, noble, righteous and virtuous characteristics as well as is enlightened and self-realised about the ultimate truth of this creation becomes totally detached from this artificial, mundane and illusionary world even while he physically lives in it, has a body, and goes about his routine duties and chores and does his assigned jobs in this world. But with erudition and truthful knowledge he has realised the futility of ththis world, and therefore he remains completely dispassionate and detached from it just like a dew drop lying on the petal of a lotus flower. He does not get the least agitated or affected or passionate by any set of circumstances, whether adverse or favourable. He remains aloof and unruffled. That is being equivalent to becoming free from all the mental, emotional and physical uneasiness created by the turmoils of this world. It is deemed that such a person has obtained virtual deliverance from the shackles of this entrapping world, a condition called ‘being emancipated and delivered while still alive’; this phrase explains what constitutes Jivan Mukti.

The *Jivan Mukti* state refers to freedom from being mentally engrossed in this delusory and artificial world and becoming free from the shackles that tie a person to the cycle of transmigration in this world while he still physically lives in it and carries out his assigned and designated duties and works with dispassion and detachment. This enables the creature to be free from any mental bondage that tie it to the ensnaring world; it is tantamount to be liberated from the shackles of this world while still living in the world with a body and going about one’s daily chores in a routine manner. After all, the very existence of the world is due to the mind; if the mind does not think that the world has any relevance, then it loses all pertinence and relevance for the creature.

²The word *Videha* means one without a physical body. This state is obtained obviously when a person dies, for then his Atma or soul escapes from his body as Pran, the vital wind responsible for keeping the body alive and active. The Pran leaves the body in the form of ‘breath’; and therefore, it is also treated as being synonymous with breath. Now, breath is ‘air’ with all its characteristic virtues and qualities. It is present everywhere, but it is neither visible nor felt unless it blows as a soft breeze when it is felt by its touch on the skin. So, in this case, the soul of a person who has become *Videha Mukti* is compared to this all-pervading but invisible wind or air which is the mainstay of life in the form of breath or ‘Pran’. Consequentially, when a person dies, the breath easily moves out of the body without any trouble. Air as breath or Pran is not a dead entity but very much alive and active like the Atma or soul of the creature. When a person is freed from his body upon death, his Atma is liberated from the boundaries that are imposed upon it by the body. The Atma sets itself free and merges with the vast cosmos which is present outside the body even as the ‘Pran’ or breath present inside the body is liberated from it when it is exhaled and merges with the air present outside the body. This is tantamount to having liberation without the encumbrance imposed by the body on the Atma of the creature.

Since the true identity of the creature is not his body but the Atma, in the case of *Videha Mukti*, this Atma or soul exits from the trapping of the body much like the breath going out from inside the body and finding

liberation in the outside air. Even as the air does not perish after it leaves the body, the Atma which is the true identity of the creature also does not perish once it leaves the body and is set free.

The word *Videha* means without a body, and the word *Mukti* means liberation and freedom, emancipation and salvation. So loosely, the phrase 'Videha Mukti' means 'freedom from the encumbrance and limitations of the body'. This Videha Mukti, generally speaking, is possible when the individual Atma, which is the truthful identity of the creature, leaves the body to merge with the cosmic Atma present outside the body of the individual creature. The example of the breath leaving the body is the best way to explain the concept. While the breath is inside the body, it represents the Atma of the individual because it is surrounded by the physical, gross body, but as soon as it is exhaled it becomes synonymous with being provided with Videha Mukti because it finds freedom from the encumbrances and limitations of the body and merges with the wind present in the vast space outside the body. So if a wise creature becomes totally unaware of his body so much so that he does not even feel the pain of a pin pricking it, when he is totally oblivious of the fact that the body even exists, then in that state of existence he is equivalent to having actually lost the body altogether — that is, the creature has obtained Videha Mukti. This state is usually achieved during meditation by Yogis when they enter 'Samadhi' which is a trance-like state of consciousness.

A truly liberated soul is one who has understood the import of these two types of Muktis and creates a synergy between the two. Such a person not only becomes 'Jivan Mukti', or freed from the burdens cast by this mundane world, but also attains 'Videha Mukti', or is freed from the encumbrances and limitations caused by the body at the same time. These two types of liberation and deliverance go hand in hand; they complement each other. The best example of a person having both these forms of Muktis simultaneously is the legendary king Janak (father of Sita and father-in-law of Lord Ram) because although he was a king taking care of the mundane work of the kingdom, internally he was completely detached from the world and is considered the most enlightened and wise king that ever existed. That is why he is also called 'Videha'. The concept of various 'Muktis' has been elaborately explained by Sri Ram to Hanuman in Shukla Yajur Veda's 'Muktiko-panishad'. This concept has been also explained by sage Ribhu to his disciple Nidagh in 'Mahopanishad, canto 2, verse nos. 36-73, and canto 5, verse nos. 23-41 amongst other Upanishads.

³The concept of *Samadhi* appearing in verse no. 2 is that state when the seeker attains the last stage in meditation when there is no agitation, and its place is taken over by utter silence or trance like state. In that silence, the cessation of the flow of thoughts results in annihilation of the mind, and with it, the body. When the thought processes cease, there can be no discrimination taking place. When discrimination ceases, the intellect cannot exist. Hence, in that final moment of silence, when the mind and intellect are dissolved—the thoughts are vanquished, the mind is conquered, discrimination is absent and the intellect is annihilated—the erstwhile individual merges with the infinite reality, resulting in supreme and endless bliss. This provides ecstasy which can't be described but only experienced by the aspirant/seeker.

Contemplation and meditation lead to Samadhi. Yogis also experience supreme bliss during Samadhi. Simply put, it is a trance like state when the consciousness has no perception of the external, physical world of sense objects and, on the contrary, it experiences the bliss of the pure self. This leads to an ecstatic state.

The term Samadhi is derived from the Sanskrit root 'Dha' which means to put or to place. To this root are added prefixes 'Sam' (well) and 'Aa' (fully). Thus the word Samadhi means 'putting or placing the mind fully well'.

In Vedanta, Samadhi means the knowledge that identifies the Atma with Brahm. It is commonly used to mean 'absorption or meditation'. The state of Samadhi is free from the dual defects (faults) of duality (that the creature and Brahm are separate) and effort (diligence in deeds and actions aimed towards the goal). That is, during the state of Samadhi, the creature loses its self independent identity and no effort is then required to experience the bliss of the supreme realisation of the absolute Truth—which is the Atma and Brahm are the same, are infinite and eternal.

There are two types of Samadhis— (i) Savikalpa Samadhi (absorption characterised by the perception of division, distinction or difference) and (ii) Nirvikalpa Samadhi (absorption free from division, distinction or difference).

The Savikalpa Samadhi is reached after long practice of the tenet 'I am Brahm' (i.e. there is no difference between me and Brahm). Unlike this practice wherein the seeker had to exert himself to maintain the thought that 'I am Brahm', during the Savikalpa Samadhi there is an effortless thought of 'I am Brahm'. This Samadhi is characterised by the perception of the distinction of the triumvirate consisting of (a) Meditator (Dhyatr), (b) Meditated object (Dheya) and (c) Meditation process (Dhyan). Though the Meditator has withdrawn his mind from all thoughts and maintains a continuous flow of a single pointed thought that 'I am Brahm', he still continues to have the distinction between (a) I, the Meditator, (b) the Object, that I am Brahm and (c) the very physical act of meditation. Nevertheless, by virtue of the strength of knowledge that 'he is Brahm', the triumvirate becomes illusionary or imaginary just like the perception of various shapes of water— such as whirlpool, wave, bubble, foam/froth etc. are nothing else but water, or the water in a cup, a glass, a jar, a tray, a pond, a lake, a river, and ocean may have different names and contours but are water nonetheless.

Sri Sankaracharya has cited the example of a clay elephant (Sarva Vedanta Siddhanta Saar Sangraha, verse nos. 821-822) to say that the elephant form does appear inspite of the knowledge that it is, after all, clay. Similarly, inspite of the knowledge that everything is Brahm, the triumvirate does exist in Savikalpa Samadhi.

Nirvikalpa Samadhi— during this state, the ideal that I am the all-pervading Brahm takes firm root and it puts an end to all ignorance. The term means 'no division or distinction or difference'. Here the seeker has no distinction between the triad of meditator or meditated object and the process of meditation.

The main difference between these two Samadhis is that in the former there is the 'knowledge or awareness' that I am Brahm while in the latter it is the 'being' of I am Brahm. The difference of knowing and being is quite evident. It is one thing to theoretically 'know' that I am Brahm and quite different to 'be' Brahm. When the thought I am Brahm becomes effortless and complete, the meditator loses the distinction between

himself, the object (Brahm) and the process (meditation)— all merge into one entity. In this Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the meditator loses the distinction between himself (I) and the object (Brahm). As a result, the ego that ‘I am meditating upon Brahm’ is vanished, and with it, the triad. By extension, it means ‘there is no experience of distinction between the knower (meditator) and the known (Brahm)’.

In Savikalpa Samadhi, the thought ‘I am Brahm’ is available for perception while in Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the same thought is not available for perception. A lump of salt floating in water will be seen as distinct from water (Savikalpa Samadhi) but when that lump of salt dissolves in water, no one can see it; there is no distinction between the water and the salt (Nirvikalpa Samadhi).

The Nirvikalpa Samadhi is the plunging of the consciousness into the ocean of bliss encapsulated inside the causal body of the creature. All ignorance pertaining to the world is dispelled and therefore the world comes to an end simply because it exists only due to ignorance. Age, caste, position, opinion— none of these is a bar in entering the chamber of the self during Samadhi. It is open to all who seek it.

To conclude, we can say that Samadhi means that state when the seeker attains the last stage in meditation when there is no agitation, and its place is taken over by utter silence or trance like state. In that silence, the cessation of the flow of thoughts results in annihilation of the mind, and with it, the body. When the thought processes cease, there can be no discrimination taking place. When discrimination ceases, the intellect cannot exist. Hence, in that final moment of silence, when the mind and intellect are dissolved—the thoughts are vanquished, the mind is conquered, discrimination is absent and the intellect is annihilated—the erstwhile individual merges with the infinite reality, resulting in supreme and endless bliss and beatitude.]—

अत्र श्लोका भवन्ति—उच्छास्त्रं शास्त्रितं चेति पौरुषं द्विविधं मतम् ।।

तत्रोच्छास्त्रमनर्थाय परमार्थाय शास्त्रितम् ।।३।।

लोकवासनया जन्तोः शास्त्रवासनयापि च ।। देहवासनया ज्ञानं यथावन्नैव जापते ।।

द्विविधो वासनान्व्यूहः शुभश्चैवाशुभश्च तौ ।। वासनौघेन शुद्धेन तत्र चेदनुनीयसे ।।४।।

तत्क्रमेण शुतेनैव मामकं पदमाप्नुहि ।। अथ चेदशुभो भावस्त्वां योजयिति संकटे ।।

प्राक्तनस्तदसौ यत्नाज्जेतव्यो भवता कपे ।। शुभाशुभाभ्यां सार्गाम्यां बहन्ती वासनासरित् ।।५।।

पौरुषेण प्रयत्नेन योजनीया शुभे पथि ।। अशुभेषु समाविष्टं शुभे ग्वेवावतारयेत् ।।६।।

अशुभाच्चालितं याति शुभं तस्मादपीतरत् ।। पौरुषेण प्रयत्नेन लालयेच्चित्तबालकम् ।।७।।

द्रागभ्यासगशाद्याति यदा ते वासनोदयम् ।। तदाभ्यासस्य साफल्यं विद्धि त्वममरिमर्दन ।।८।।

In this regard there is a ‘Shloka’ (scriptural hymn or verse) that says that a man’s efforts and endeavours are of two types—(a) one that is against or opposed to the guidelines prescribed by the scriptures, and (b) one that is in consonant with them or in accordance with the guidelines set by them.

Out of these two, the former is the root cause of all misfortunes, degradation, ruin and doom; pursuing such a path is futile, ruinous and a waste of time and energy. On the other hand, efforts made in accordance to the scriptural guidelines prove to be a boon for the creature’s spiritual enhancement and welfare, and it gives emancipation and salvation to its soul.

The actual truth (as enunciated by the scriptures) cannot be learnt by the creature as long as it has ‘Lok Vasana’ (i.e. desire for, and attraction towards, this materialistic world), ‘Shastra Vasana’ (i.e. desire to become expert in the scriptural

books, to be much sought after for his literal knowledge, and to be recognised and honoured as such), and 'Deha Vasana' (i.e. to yearn for gratification of the sense organs). That is, these three Vasanas are the obstacles that come in the way of gaining truthful knowledge about the absolute Truth and irrefutable Reality.

The Vasanas¹ are again classified into two types—good and bad (or auspicious and inauspicious; un-corrupt and corrupt; the ones that lead to a creature's well being and its all round welfare and the ones that cause its ruin and degradation).

Oh Hanuman! If you pursue truthful knowledge by taking the help of good Vasanas, or by following the auspicious and righteous path shown by the scriptures, you will benefit immensely from it and get an opportunity to achieve the noble and exalted stature which is equivalent to the spiritual utopia that would give you access to my abode. On the contrary, if you follow bad, inauspicious and corrupt Vasanas, then you will land in great trouble.

Oh Lord of the monkeys! You must diligently endeavour to conquer/vanquish all the accumulated results of past deeds done by you. You should divert the surging river of the different Vasanas that is flowing through the various paths represented by all types good and bad desires that arise in a normal creature, paths that represent all types of inclinations and tendencies that are inherently and universally present in all the creatures that live in this world, into a channel that is uniformly pure and un-corrupt, that is uniformly pure and auspicious. That is, encourage your thought processes to pass through good and spiritually enhancing channels instead of allowing them to go wayward and swerve towards evil and sinful thoughts.

The flow of Vasanas (i.e. inherent tendencies and natural inclinations of the mind of the creature; the natural thoughts and desires that are universally present in all the creatures) through the path that is evil and bad should be industriously diverted towards a path that is considered good and auspicious by the scriptures. This is because it is a tendency of the mind that it cannot rest and is always in a state of flux. Therefore, as a consequence, when it is stopped from going towards evil and bad, it will automatically overflow into that channel which is good, and this is true for the opposite situation also². A man should try to tame the mischievous child-like mind most lovingly and courteously, and politely but firmly coax it, entice it and cajole it into doing what is good, righteous and virtuous.

When both the types of your Vasanas (i.e. both the good as well as the bad Vasanas) begin to disintegrate, get gradually diminished in their intensity and finally vanish altogether, then oh the vanquisher of enemies, you should become assured that your efforts are bearing fruits (3-8).

[Note—¹*Vasanas*--The pure consciousness (Atma) is the core of a man's personality. It is infinite, pure, all-pervading, omniscient, enlightened, changeless and supreme truth/reality. However, its infinite nature is clouded by the various Vrittis (inherent tendencies and inclinations) and Vasanas (desires and passion inherent in a man) resulting in the creation of a finite, limited, impure, corrupt, not fully enlightened, ever changing personality of the human being—such a person is called the 'perceiver-feeler-thinker-doer' entity. When the various Vrittis or Vasanas are eliminated or excluded (i.e. catheterized), the attitude undergoes transformation and metamorphosis from a perceiver-feeler-thinker entity (corresponding to the gross body, the mind and intellect collectively called the subtle body) into simple pure consciousness which, in reality, is the true identity of the creature.

Man's real and truthful nature is pure consciousness but he passes through the three different, distinct, relative states of the waker, dreamer

and deep sleeper states as a result of the interaction or play of consciousness in the Gross, the Subtle and the Causal bodies respectively. No sooner the identification of the pure consciousness with any one or more of these bodies is removed than his original, pure, natural form is unfolded. This state is called self-realisation, or Godhood—or it is also called the state of supreme and sublime bliss, joy, happiness, peace and tranquility. Hence, when the pleural personality is removed, the real, singularly unique personality shines through.

It is the Atma which ignites/kindles/infuses life in the other 5 sheaths which are, left to themselves, inert and lifeless, even as a piece of iron is lifeless without the infusion of life into it by a magnet held nearby. This magnet is separate and distinct from the iron but it invisibly gives life to the dead, gross and inert piece of iron. The iron is the five sheaths and the magnet is the Atma. Remove the Atma and the man is as lifeless as the piece of iron.

According to Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, the Atma resides in the heart which is shaped like an 8-petal lotus. Each petal of this lotus symbolises one type of 'Vritti'. The petal facing to the east represents the righteous and noble inclinations; the petal facing south-east corner (Agneya) represents sleep, drowsiness, lethargy, inertia, and disinclination to work; the petal facing to the south direction represents cruel tendencies; the petal facing in the south-west angle (Nairitya) represents the inclination of the mind to be sinful, unrighteous and pervert; the petal facing towards the west represents the desires for sports, action and play; that petal facing to the north-west direction (Vayabya) represents the desire to be on the move, to go, roam and wander; the petal in the north direction represents the affection of a creature for Brahm, its true self and its desires to endear it; the petal in the north-east direction (Ishan) represents the desires for charity; and the petals surrounding the thalamus represent the tendency to renounce, to be dispassionate and detached from the artificial, sensual world (verse no. 8).

Vasanas are the numerous attractions, desires, yearnings, infatuations and other natural inclinations of the creature that tie him to this world. These Vasanas are of three types—viz. (a) 'Lok Vasana'—this is the desire and greed for wealth, fame, sensual objects, territorial gains, powers, majesty etc.; it also refers to the 'Vasanas' pertaining to the body vis-à-vis one's son, property and wealth which a person has acquired and enjoys, and the world around him—his relatives, his fame, his contacts, his friends, his obligation, contracts and responsibility; it also means to appease those who are related to him with this body. The Vasanas relating to the world are the various attractions and allurements that his apparently enchanting and captivating world presents to a person. It also refers to the various and endless responsibilities and obligations, real and imaginary, that a person has or imagines he has towards this world. (b) 'Shastra Vasana'—this is the desire and yearnings related to scriptures and literature, such as a desire to become expert in them and be recognised as such, to studying them more and more, acquiring scholarship, expertise and accompanying fame, good name and money through them, become much sought after and acquire a wide followership based on this expertise and oratory etc. But this is a futile exercise because the scriptures are vast and like a fathomless ocean, and trying to realise the Supreme Truth by delving into the depths of the scriptures is like extracting pearl by churning the ocean. Though it is theoretically possible, but practically it is impossible and too far fetched. Such people

rely too much on the letter of the scriptures and do not understand or follow their spirit, engrossing themselves in endless doubts and debates which in turn lead to confusions and contradictions. It is rare to find an enlightened soul amongst worldly scholars and orators, for their erudition is limited to gaining fame and name and nothing more. (c) 'Deha Vasana' —this is the insatiable desire and passion related to the gratification of the sense organs, such as becoming licentious, engrossing oneself in enjoyment of worldly sensual objects, and all other types of indulgences and gratifications.

Now, when we talk of the Atma as pure consciousness or an embodiment of light, the question arises 'how can we obtain the clearest perception of that reality?' The greatest exponent of Vedanta philosophy, sage Adi Sankaracharya prescribes the following four paths—(i) discrimination between the eternal and truthful, and the non-eternal and non-truthful, (ii) renunciation of desires for sensual gratification and enjoyment of pleasures from this materialistic world, (iii) development of six divine eclectic wealth —self control, surrender, faith, forbearance, peace/tranquility and poise of the mind, and (iv) sincere desire for liberation and deliverance, because it is only then that the creature will try to find ways to achieve it.

Basically there are three types of Vasanas as follows—(a) The 'Vasanas' pertaining to the body relate to the attachments that one has with one's son, property and wealth which a person has acquired and enjoyed with his body, and the world around him —his relatives, his fame, his contacts, his friends, his obligation, contracts and responsibilities. It also means gratification of the sense organs of the body as well as to appease those who are related to him with this body so that they continue to serve and help him and give comfort and pleasure to his body.

(b) The 'Vasanas' pertaining to the scriptures relate to the desire and passion for studying them more and more, acquiring scholarship, expertise and the accompanying fame and money through them, relying too much on the letter of the scriptures and not their spirit, engrossing oneself in endless discussions and debates leading to confusions and contradictions. The scriptures are vast and like a fathomless sea. Trying to realise the Supreme Truth by delving into the depths of the scriptures is like an attempt at extracting pearl by churning the ocean. Though it is theoretically possible, but practically it is impossible.

(c) The 'Vasanas' relating to the world are the various attractions and allurements that this apparently enchanting and captivating world presents to a person, drawing him like iron to a magnet. It also refers to the various and endless responsibilities and obligations, real and imaginary, that a person has, or imagines he has, towards this world.

'All human actions have one or more of these 7 causes —chance, nature, compulsion, habit, passion and desire' —Aristotle.

'Do not ye yet understand that what so entereth the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those thing that proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart (and the mind); and they defile the man for out of the heart (and the mind) proceed evil thought, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness (lies), blasphemies. These are the thing that defile a man' (Bible, St. Matthew, 15/17-20).

²The mind is compared to the surging river because like the river that is swollen, the mind is also powerful enough to crash through every

barrier and cause havoc for the creature if it is not controlled. The river can inundate large tracts of land and cause immense troubles when it is in spate, and especially when it is not properly channelised. It would carry clean water along its normal course, but it also collects filthy garbage and litter if it overflows its banks into the countryside and inundates fields and villages. The same river can produce electricity in a dam, and it can cause floods and havoc if not harnessed properly. The mind and its inclinations have a similar tendency—if the mind is properly harnessed, it has stupendous potentials that can lead to a creature's welfare, but if it is left untended and loose then it can cause havoc for it.]

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संदिग्धायामपि_भृशं_शुभामेव_समाचर_।_शुभायां_वासनावृद्धौ_न_दोषाय_मरुत्सुत_॥९॥

Oh Son of the Wind God! When in doubt, you should take the safer bet and focus your attention on Vasanas that are categorised as 'good'.

Be consciously and consistently focusing your attention towards good, auspicious, righteous, uncorrupt and noble Vasanas (and keep away from the opposite type of Vasanas, i.e. the bad ones). If such good Vasanas are enhanced, they never produce bad results. [That is, if the choice is between good and bad Vasanas, the seeker should opt for the former, but when there is no choice, it is better to divert the mind forcefully towards things which are considered noble and good instead of letting the mind lying idle or allowing it to rest on bad thoughts because the mind can never rest in peace and will automatically, imperceptibly go towards unrighteous Vasanas as they are more pleasing for the gross body of the creature and gratifies its sense organs.] (9).

वासनाक्षयविज्ञानमनोनाशा_महामते_।_समकालं_चिराभ्यस्ता_भवन्ति_फलदा_मताः_॥१०॥

Oh wise Hanuman! The three steps that help the seeker or aspirant to benefit from the truthful awareness of what constitutes Vasanas are the following— (i) diligent efforts that lead to disintegration, purging and elimination of Vasanas, (ii) acquisition of truthful knowledge about what constitutes Vasanas, and (iii) conquering of the mind. They produce their good results over a long period of time (10).

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त्रय_एवं_समं_यावन्नाभ्यस्ताश्च_पुनः_पुनः_।_तावन्न_पदसंप्राप्तिर्भवत्यपि_समाशतैः_॥११॥

Unless these three are diligently practiced simultaneously, one cannot achieve the 'Kaivalya Pad' (literally the only and one state of existence that is to become one with the supreme Lord or Brahm; emancipation and final salvation of the soul) even in hundreds of years (11).

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एकैकशो_निषेव्यन्ते_यद्येते_चिरमप्यलम्_।_तन्न_सिद्धिं_प्रयच्छन्ति_मन्त्रां_संकीर्तिता_इव_॥१२॥

If they are practiced separately or in an ad-hoc basis, they do not produce the desired results even as the various Mantras prove useless if they are not repeated in a proper and an integrated way. [For example, the letters of the alphabet should be arranged and used in a proper sequence to form a meaningful word, phrase or sentence; otherwise, a fractured structure of the sequence of the same letters will make no sense at all.] (12).

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त्रिभिरेतैश्चिराभ्यस्तैर्हृदयग्रन्थयो_दृढाः_।_निःशङ्कमेव_ब्रुवन्ति_बिसच्छेदाद्गुणा_इव_॥१३॥

If those three (see above) are practiced simultaneously over a long period of time with diligence and patience, the strong knots of the heart that tie down the creature to this artificial and deluding world are easily untied (or dismantled) just like the strands of fiber of a lotus flower fall apart when its stem is split/broken into two (13).

जन्मान्तरशताभ्यस्ता_मिथ्या_संसारवासना_। सा_चिराभ्यासयोगेन_विना_न_क्षीयते_क्वचित्_॥१४॥

The worldly desires and passions, greeds and yearnings which are being pursued over hundred of lives cannot be so easily purged and overcome without doing diligent practice as well as making sincere and industrious efforts for a long period of time (14).

तस्मात्सौम्य_प्रयत्नेन_पौरुषेण_विवेकिना_। भोगेच्छां_दूरतस्त्यक्त्वा_त्रयमेव_समाश्रय_॥१५॥

Hence, oh dear Hanuman, bow before (i.e. say good-bye to) the desire for gratification of the sense organs as well as all yearnings and passions pertaining to this materialistic world from a distance, and instead of them you should follow the above three paths most diligently and intelligently (15).

तस्माद्वासनया_युक्तं_मनो_बद्धं_विदुर्बुधाः_। सम्यग्वासनया_त्वक्तं_मुक्तमित्यभिधीयते_।
मनोनिर्वासनीभावमाचराशु_महाकपे_॥१६॥

Those who are erudite and wise have called the 'Mana' (mind-heart complex) which is full of Vasanas as being tied or shackled, while that which is without it is defined as being free or liberated. Oh great Kapi (i.e. Hanuman)! Therefore, you should bring the Mana in the latter category as soon as you can; the earlier the better for you (16).

सम्यगालोचनात्सत्याद्वासना_प्रविलीयते_। वासनाविलये_चेतः_शममायाति_दीपवत्_॥१७॥

Vasanas are gradually destroyed by proper thoughts, deep ponderings, contemplation and practicing of the Truth. When the Vasanas are exhausted, the 'Chitta' (i.e. mind-intellect complex and the sub-conscious) also vanishes (i.e. becomes defunct and ineffective) like the light of the lamp that goes out when its oil is exhausted (17).

वासनां_संपरित्यज्य_मयि_चिन्मात्रविग्रहे_। यस्तिष्ठति_गतव्यग्रः_सोऽहं_सच्चित्सुखात्मकः_॥१८॥

He who abandons all Vasanas for good, and instead concentrates his attention unwaveringly and persistently on the pure conscious and truthful form of mine (i.e. Lord Ram who is Brahm personified) attains the supreme blissful state of existence that is synonymous with becoming one like me. In other words, such a wise man achieves that state where there is constant peace and tranquility on mind, leading to perpetual bliss and happiness for him (18).

समाधिमथ_कार्याणि_मा_करोतु_करोतु_वा_। हृदयेनात्तसर्वेहो_मुक्त_एवोत्तमाशयः_॥१९॥

It does not matter whether such a person does various religious rituals or not; whether he practices Samadhi or not. He, in whose heart there is no trace of Vasana left, is the one who has been really and truthfully freed; he is really and truthfully exalted (19).

नैष्कर्म्येण_न_तस्यार्थस्तस्यार्थोऽस्ति_न_कर्मभिः_। न_ससाधनजाप्याभ्यां_यस्य_निर्वासनं_मनः_॥२०॥
संत्यक्तवासनान्मौनादृते_नास्त्युत्तमं_पदम्_॥२१॥

Those people who have removed the various Vasanas from their mind and heart are not unduly bothered about either doing any deed or not doing it. [This is because they do not get mentally and emotionally involved in any deed and their results; they do the deeds with a sense of total detachment and dispassion; they do deeds selflessly.] They do not need to do 'Japa' (repetition of the divine Mantras) as well. [This is because the primary object of Japa is to purge the mind of all impure thoughts and fill it with pure thoughts. For a wise and realised person who has understood what constitutes Vasanas and their degrading effect on his spiritual progress is automatically categorised as one who has good thoughts.] To eliminate all Vasanas and become quiet, i.e. become free from all agitations and restlessness, is akin to being blissful and happy which are the hallmarks of the supreme state called 'Param Pad'. There is no other stature called 'the supreme state' except the abandonment/elimination of all the Vasanas and becoming silent (i.e. a state when all the agitations of the mind, intellect and the heart cease) (21).

— वासनाहीनमप्येतच्चक्षुरादीन्द्रियं स्वतः । प्रवर्तते बहिः स्वार्थे वासनामात्रकारणम् ॥२२॥

Though a wise man might have controlled his mind and vanquished his overt Vasanas (i.e. there might be no apparent passions, desires, greed and yearnings in him that can be seen overtly), but the tendency of the various sense organs of the body, such as eyes, to be attracted towards their respective objects are also a form of suppressed or latent, unapparent and covert Vasana. [That is, the tendency of the eye, for example, to look at pleasant scenes is also a form of desire or yearning of the heart and the mind to satisfy their need to look at pleasant views vis-à-vis unpleasant views.] (22).

— अयत्नोपनतेष्वक्षि दृग्द्रव्येषु यथा पुनः । नीरागमेव पतति तद्वत्कार्येषु धीरधीः ॥२३॥

Even as the eyes have a natural tendency to glance randomly at all the myriad visible things that come within sight without actually 'seeing' them, or getting engrossed in closely observing them, or getting enchanted by them, a firm and resolute seeker who is patient and steady in his spiritual pursuit carries on with his work in this world without getting involved in it. [That is, the seeker does not get attached with the deeds done by him at the sentimental level; he does all the deeds dispassionately and without bothering about the results, whether they are good or bad, compatible or unfavourable.] (23).

— भावसंवित्प्रकटितामनुरूपा च मारुते । चित्तस्योत्पत्त्युपरमा वासनां मुनयो विदुः ॥२४॥

On the son of the Wind God! The imaginary but majestic realms which are generated by the mind-intellect complex of the creature and are in accordance with its imaginations and compatibly favourable to it—erudite sages call these tendencies of the mind-intellect as Vasanas. [The mind-intellect first creates a world which it likes. Then, since this world is in accordance to its likeness and compatible to it, the mind-intellect begins to remain engrossed in it; it repeatedly dwells on the enticing objects of this material world that seem to attract the mind-intellect much like the water attracts the fish. The world of attractions is generated by the mind-intellect apparatus for its own charm, and then the latter finds it so alluring and captivating for itself that it simply cannot resist its temptations. It wishes to delve on those subjects for a long time; they are sufficiently enticing for the mind as well as the intellect to constantly and repeatedly divert their attention towards them. In short, the mind-intellect or the Chitta of the creature becomes servile to the Vasanas pertaining to the world.]

Therefore, that tendency of the mind and the intellect to remain engrossed in the world involuntarily has been described as Vasanas by those who are wise and erudite (24).

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दृढाभ्यस्तपदार्यैकभावनादतिचञ्चलम्_चित्तं_संजायते_जन्मजरामरणकारणम्_॥२५॥

The state of flux or the agitation created in the mind-intellect due to persistent thought of those enticing/pleasing objects of the world, the reality of which are already well known and normally do not qualify for any special attention — such a restless mind-intellect is at the root cause of birth, old age and death. [This is because the mind would constantly think of those objects of which it is fond, and such constant thoughts would establish a permanent bond between the seeker and the object. When he dies, his mind would be hooked to this world, and this would determine his new birth because the soul would not desire any other thing but those things which the creature had been longing for when he was alive. For example, if a man is too much attached to his son and wife, he would die thinking about them and their welfare and so many things that are left undone by him that he had been planning to do for the son and the wife. So when he dies, these desires and unfulfilled dreams would impel him to take a new birth so that they can be completed. This is like a student yearning to clear a competitive examination by repeatedly appearing in it if he fails in his attempts; he seems to be obsessed with clearing that exam even at the cost of his health, and even when he realises that he does not have the required aptitude for the job that he aspires to bag. Compared to him is a wise student who takes the failure in his stride and moves ahead in life and takes some other job that is more compatible to his abilities and aptitude. The result is the first student becomes bogged down in frustration while the other one rises in life. In our present case, when a man gets involved in the world, he forgets the fundamental tenet of spiritualism that the Atma is the true identity of a creature, and that the Atma has no relationships. It is dispassionate and neutral. The body that gets involved in deeds, that establishes various relationships with the world, and that enjoys or suffers from the deeds or such relationships, is not the creature's true self. This wisdom implies that the creature never dies, never gets old and it never takes birth because the Atma is eternal, uniform and imperishable by nature, and hence its death, decay and birth does not arise at all.] (25)

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वासनावशतः_प्राणस्पन्दस्तेन_च_वासना_क्रियते_चित्तबीजस्य_तेन_बीजाङ्कुरक्रमः_॥२६॥

The Pran (i.e. the essential life sustaining forces present inside a creature) is subjected to constant shaking and stirring by the Vasanas generated in its mind and heart. This is because the Pran which is synonymous with breath has its primary seat in the heart, and any restlessness created by desires, passions and yearnings have a direct effect on the heart and through it upon the Pran. [That is why a man who has endless desires and aspirations are more prone to stress related medical problems as compared to a carefree man who has nothing to bother about in this world.] These vibrations created in the Pran by one set of Vasanas generate more Vasanas, and the chain continues endlessly. The seed, so to speak, creates a tree of Vasanas which in its turn produces more seeds from which new trees are produced (26).

द्वे_बीजे_चित्तवृक्षस्य_प्राणस्पन्दनवासने_एकस्मिंश्च_तयोः_क्षीणे_क्षिप्रं_द्वे_अपि_नश्यतः_॥२७॥

The tree of 'Chitta'¹, or the tree representing Chitta (i.e. mind-intellect complex along with the sub-conscious of the creature which are also called the creature's

subtle body) has two seeds— (i) Pran (the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), and (ii) Vasanas (the compulsive forces that drive the creature towards the objects of this materialistic world at the cost of his mental peace). Out of these, if one decays or if one is removed, the other follows suit (27).

[Note—¹*Chitta Shakti*—The faculty of reasoning and thought; the conscious intellect; the powers of discrimination, understanding, paying attention, memorizing, and the ability to recollect and store information that are characteristics of the conscious powers exhibited by the mind and intellect apparatus; the sub-conscious and memory; the ability to concentrate and focus the mind on anything. (The concept has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 5; Sanayso-panishad, canto 2, verse no.42-46).]

असङ्गव्यवहारत्वाद्भवभावनवर्जनात्_शरीरनाशदर्शित्वाद्वासना_न_प्रवर्तते_।
वासनासंपरित्यागाच्चित्तं_गच्छत्यचित्तताम्_॥२८॥

There are three ways by which the birth of new Vasanas can be stopped—viz. (i) to do deeds without getting emotionally involved in them, without getting attached or engrossed in them, or to do them with complete dispassion, (ii) to stop thinking unduly about this artificial and perishable world, and (iii) to be constantly aware of the perishable, impermanent and despicable nature of this body. And once the Vasanas are annihilated, the mind-intellect complex becomes defunct or inert, i.e. it loses its capacity to generate new Vasanas. This is because the intelligence tells the creature about the horrifying effects of having Vasanas and their evil and abhorable nature. No wise person who loves himself would like to have any dealing with anything that is harmful to his own self interest (28).

अवासनत्वात्सततं_यदा_न_मनुते_मनः_।अमनस्ता_तदोदेति_परमोपशमप्रदा_॥२९॥

Obviously, when the Vasanas are destroyed or purged, the agitations of the mind automatically subside, because it is the different desires, yearnings, greed, passions, volitions, hopes and expectations pertaining to this world that keeps the creature constantly agitated and restless. The absence of Vasanas result in the mind remaining free from all yearnings and desires that had been keeping it hooked to the material and artificial world that the mind needed to satisfy its yearnings for gratifications of the sense organs. That is, the intellect takes charge from the emotional-driven heart and mind. Since intellect is empowered with the power to discriminate between what is good and what is bad, the creature is said to have acquired 'wisdom', and with the calming-down of the agitated mind, the creature achieves peace, tranquility, bliss and happiness (29).

अव्युत्पन्नमना_यावद्भवानज्ञात_तत्पदः_।गुरुशास्त्रप्रमाणैस्तु_निर्णीतं_तावदाचर_॥३०॥

ततः_पक्वकषायेण_नूनं_विज्ञातवस्तुना_।शुभोऽप्यसौ_त्वया_त्याज्यो_वासनौघौ_निराधिना_॥३१॥

Till the time 'Gyan'¹ (truthful knowledge about the reality; self realisation) and 'Vivek' (erudition, wisdom, power to discriminate between the good and the bad) does not light up your inner-self, you should follow the lighted path shown by a wise teacher or by the scriptures. [That is, in the absence of the light generated by enlightenment and self-realisation, you need some help in your spiritual progress; otherwise you will be groping in the dark and might go astray. For this light, you should seek the guidance of the teacher or the scripture.] Gradually, when you

become well-versed in the truth about the absolute, supreme and irrefutable Reality, you should abandon good Vasanas too. [Please see verse no. 3-8 also.] (30-31).

[Note—¹*Gyan*—Truthful knowledge of what constitutes the absolute, eternal, universal, incontrovertible and irrefutable Reality and Truth. The realisation or awareness that Atma is, inter alia, different from the body, and is the true identity of a creature, is called ‘Gyan’. This Atma is a very unique entity and is called the ‘true self’ of the creature. Gyan refers to self realisation and attainment of enlightenment about the absolute Truth and Reality in this creation. It encompasses a broad swathe of philosophy which is taught by the Upanishads, called Vedanta. The difference between ‘Gyan’ and ‘Vigyan’ can be succinctly summed up in the statement—‘Brahm is’ or ‘Lord is’. This awareness and firm conviction of its truth is Gyan, while to say truthfully that ‘Brahm is I’ or ‘Lord is I’ is called Vigyan.

The concept of Gyan has been explained in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39. The seven steps to Gyan has been elaborately described in Mahopanishad, canto 5, verse nos.21-47 of the Sam Veda tradition.

In this context, there are two other relevant concepts—(a) Gyan Yoga and (b) Gyan Shakti. *Gyan Yoga* involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be ‘real’ but is actually like a ‘shadow of the truth’. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called ‘seers’ because they can ‘see’ beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature. Gyan gives sufficient power, strength and wisdom to the creature which enlightens it about the good and the bad, about what is beneficial for it and what is ruinous for it. It is the empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise. This is called *Gyan Shakti*, simply because merely wish and determination wouldn’t suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the expertise and wisdom to accomplish his objectives successfully.]

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द्विविधश्चित्तनाशोऽस्ति_सरूपोऽरूप_एव_च_। जीवन्मुक्तः_सरूपः_स्यादरूपो_देहमुक्तिगः_॥३२॥

The annihilation or the vanquishing of ‘Chitta’ is of two types— (i) one with attributes or forms, and (ii) the other without attributes or forms. The seekers who are called ‘Jivan Mukta’ (see verse no. 2) —i.e. those who have freed themselves from the shackles of this deluding world while still alive and living in it, are able to annihilate their ‘Chitta’ by going about their worldly affairs dispassionately, selflessly and remaining totally detached towards everything. This is called annihilation or the vanquishing of ‘Chitta’ while it has a definitive form, because the wise person has to focus the mind on the work at hand and do it with the same diligence that is used by the man who is emotionally and mentally involved with this world and his deeds. Outwardly, there seems no difference between the two men, but the mental state of detachment and dispassion distinguishes them.

Similarly, those who are ‘Videha Mukta’ — i.e. those who have shed their mortal coil (the gross body), are able to purge the mind-intellect complex for good because they do not have either any gross and physical body which has a definitive

form or any unfulfilled desires left at the time of death, and therefore they have no reason to re-enter the cycle of birth and death (32).

[Note—The concepts of Jivan Mukti and Videha Mukti have also been described in note of verse no. 19, Canto 2 of Shatyayani Upanishad which is chapter 18 of this volume.]

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अस्य_नाशमिदानीं_त्वं_पावने_शृणु_सादरम्_॥३३॥

Annihilation/control/purging of the mind:- Oh son of the Wind God! Now listen attentively about the purging and annihilation of the mind (33).

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चित्तनाशाभिधानं_हि_यदा_ते_विद्यते_पुनः_।_मैत्र्यादिभिर्मुणैर्युक्तं_शान्तिमेति_न_संशयः_।_
भूयोजन्मविनिर्मुक्तं_जीवन्मुक्तस्य_तन्मनः_॥३४॥

When your mind and sub-conscious has reached that state when it has purged itself of all its Vrittis (inherent tendencies and temperaments; its natural yearnings, desires and greed pertaining to this world), when it has conquered all its attachments and allurements with this enticing world, when it has vanquished its tendencies to seek gratification and comfort from the material world—it is only then it acquires such noble virtues as universal friendship and brotherhood, compassion and mercy, remaining perpetually in a state of no worry and no agitation, and remaining established in total dispassion, detachment, non-involvement and neutrality. This state provides perpetual and eternal happiness and tranquility, contentedness and peace, beatitude and felicity. Such a person is deemed to be liberated and delivered even though he is alive because his mind and heart have become free from all bondages (34).

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सरूपोऽसौ_मनोनाशो_जीवन्मुक्तस्य_विद्यते_।_अरूपस्तु_मनोनाशो_वैदेहीमुक्तिगो_भवेत्_॥३५॥

In short, if the mind is controlled and freed from all worldly bondages while the man is alive, it is but natural that at the time of his death his mind would be free from all bondages at the time of death. Otherwise, he would be dying worrying about his unfulfilled desires and unaccomplished tasks. This would obviously lead to restlessness at the time of death, and this would result in his taking birth again in order to fulfill what is unfulfilled, and to finish what is yet unfinished. Agitations never give peace. There is no doubt about it (35).

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सहस्राङ्कुरशाखात्मफलपल्लवशालिनः_॥३६॥

अस्य_संसारवृक्षस्य_मनोमूलमिदं_स्थितम्_।_संकल्प_एव_तन्मन्ये_संकल्पोपशमेन_तत्_॥३७॥

Hence, the mind is the ‘root’ of this vast, colossus world-like tree with thick bark and huge branches, well laden with all sorts of seeds, fruits, flowers and leaves.

The mind is full of ‘Sankalps’ (i.e. numerous volitions, resolutions, determinations, vows and promises, firm hopes and aspirations). Hence, get rid of these so that the tree-like world loses its nourishment and charm, and consequentially it would gradually dry up (36-37).

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शोषयाशु_यथा_शोषमेति_संसारपादपः_।_उपाय_एक_एवास्ति_मनसः_स्वस्य_निग्रहे_॥३८॥

मनसोऽभ्युदयो_नाशो_मनोनाशो_महोदयः_।_ज्ञमनो_नाशमभ्येति_मनो_ज्ञस्य_हि_शृङ्खला_॥३९॥

The only way to restrain and subject the mind to self-restriction, and to calm down its agitations and restlessness, is to have firm faith in the fact that the mind’s best interests are served by not allowing it to go unleashed because that will lead to its

downfall, it will be detrimental to its own good and welfare. On the other hand, controlling it, putting it under leash, and subjecting it to self restrain will be for its own good and welfare.

This erudition, wisdom and sagacious thinking, called Gyan, helps to control the mind; it helps to put a leash on the mind. An ignorant person's indulgent, reckless and untamed mind is like a shackling chain for him. (38-39).

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तावन्निशीव_वेताला_वल्गन्ति_हृदि_वासनाः_।_एकतत्त्वदृढाभ्यासाद्यावन्न_विजितं_मनः_।।४०।।

The free-run of Vasanas in the heart of the seeker are like the ghosts and phantoms of the night. They exist only till the time the seeker is not aware of the Truth, which is like a light that dispels darkness of ignorance; and with the darkness gone, the ghosts and phantoms also vanish. The mind can be controlled only by realising the truth of one vital factor— that is, the entire world is false, the Atma is pure and the only conscious factor, it is blissful and eternal, and it is synonymous with the supreme Brahm (40).

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प्रक्षीणचित्तदर्पस्य_निगृहीतेन्द्रियद्विषः_।_पन्निन्य_इव_हेमन्ते_क्षीयन्ते_भोगवासनाः_।।४१।।

Those who have conquered their three enemies, viz. their 'Chitta' (mind, sub-conscious and intellect; see note of verse no. 27-31), their 'Darpa' (false pride, vanity, arrogance, conceit, boastfulness, rashness, haughtiness and hypocrisy) and their 'Indris' (various sense organs), their Vasanas are automatically annihilated just like the lotus flower that withers away itself at the approach of snowfall in winter (41).

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हस्तं_हस्तेन_संपीड्य_दन्तैर्दन्तान्विचूर्ण्य_च_।_अङ्गान्यङ्गैः_समाक्रम्य_जयेदादौ_स्वकं_मनः_।।४२।।

Therefore, you should use all means to first exercise control over your mind-intellect complex, and do it diligently and by making industrious efforts—make an all-out effort to control it by wringing your hands, grinding your teeth, and exerting pressure upon it (42).

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उपविश्योपविश्यैकां_चिन्तकेन_मुहुर्मुहुः_।_न_शक्यते_मनो_जेतुं_विना_युक्तिमनिन्दिताम्_।।४३।।

There is no other better way to conquer the mind than to sit down silently and peacefully, with a focused intellect, to contemplate and concentrate upon the pure-self or the pure conscious Atma (43).

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अङ्कुशेन_विना_मत्तो_यथा_दुष्टमतङ्गजः_।_अध्यात्मविद्याधिगमः_साधुसंगतिरेव_च_।।४४।।

वासनासंपरित्यागः_प्राणस्पन्दनिरोधनम्_।_एतास्ता_युक्तयः_पुष्टा_सन्ति_चित्तजये_किल_।।४५।।

सतीषु_युक्तिष्वेतासु_हठान्नियमयन्ति_ये_।_चेतसो_दीपमुत्सृज्य_विचिन्वन्ति_तमोऽञ्जनैः_।।४६।।

विमूढाः_कर्तुमुद्युक्ता_ये_हठाच्चेतसो_जयम्_।_ते_निबध्नन्ति_नागेन्द्रमुन्मत्तं_बिरातन्तुभिः_।।४७।।

Even as a wild and intoxicated elephant cannot be brought under control without a goad, the potent and powerful instruments/implements that are needed to control the ever agitated mind-intellect called the Chitta are the following— (i) the acquisition of spiritual knowledge, (ii) company of good, wise and pious people, (iii) total abandonment or forsaking of all Vasanas, and (iv) the practice of 'Pranayam' (i.e. Yoga exercises in which the vital wind forces of the body—especially breathing process—are controlled). Those people who try to forcibly mollify and control the wild and reckless elephant representing the mind-intellect complex by any other means are groping in the dark without the light of a lamp, and they are trying to tie the elephant with the help of the stem of a lotus flower (44-47).

द्वे बीजे चित्तवृक्षस्य वृत्तिव्रततिधारिणः । एकं प्राणपरिस्पन्दो द्वितीयं दृढभावना ॥४८॥

The different ‘Virtis’ (i.e. habits, natural temperaments, inherent tendencies and inclinations of a creature) are like creepers, and they rely on the tree of ‘Chitta’ (the mind-intellect and the sub-consciousness) for support and sustenance. This tree has two types of seeds— (i) The vibrations of the wind forces of life (called the Pran), and (ii) firm resolves, convictions and beliefs that a person has cultivated (48).

सा हि सर्वगाता संवित्प्राणस्पन्देन चाल्येत । चित्तैकाग्रयाद्यतो ज्ञानमुक्तं समुपजायते ॥४९॥

The vibrations of the Pran activate the life that is present in each individual creature. The concentration and firmness of the Chitta (i.e. the steadfastness and firm convictions of the mind)—when properly directed and focused— results in awareness and acquisition of truthful knowledge about the absolute Truth and the Reality of the world and existence, without any faltering or stumbling at every distraction and obstacle coming in the path of the seeker/aspirant. This results in his Mukti, i.e. his liberation and deliverance from this deluding and artificial world; emancipation and salvation of his soul (49).

तत्साधनमथो ध्यानं यथावदुपदिश्यते । विनाप्यविकृतिं कृत्स्नां संभवत्यत्ययक्रमात् । यशोऽरिष्टं च चिन्मात्रं चिदानन्दं विचिन्तय ॥५०॥

Therefore, amongst the means to put a leash on and harness the potential of the mind-intellect complex, the process of ‘Dhyan’¹ (i.e. meditation, contemplation, focus of attention on the pure-self and concentration on the truth and absolute reality), as enshrined in and enunciated by the Upanishads, has been prescribed as a chief mean or way to do so.

Even if it is not possible for your mind-intellect apparatus to be purged of all its faults and impurities (i.e. impure thoughts, corrupt tendencies, worldly desires and passions are not fully expunged from the mind), you should still try to contemplate upon the supreme transcendental Brahm who is an embodiment of eternal, infinite, absolute and supreme bliss and happiness. The instant the mind steps upon this citadel of eternal bliss and contentedness, it attains the state of glory and majesty, whereas diversion from this path produces infamy and ruin; it leads to it being denigrated to sorrows and torments associated with this world.

The natural habit of the mind is to remain in a state of flux² and take the easy path downhill towards worldly enjoyments and gratification of the sense organs (because spiritual efforts are an uphill task requiring diligence and industry). So, you must constantly try to wean the mind away from going astray down hill, and instead pull it industriously up to focus on the supreme Brahm (50).

[Note--¹Dhyan—The Sanskrit word ‘Dhyan’ means ‘to think or to cogitate’. Here it means both contemplation as well as meditation. The word also means ‘attention; focus’. So, this word is generally understood in common parlance to be similar to contemplation and meditation, concentration and focusing of the conscious mind. It covers both the terms in its ambit. (The concept of Dhyan has been described in detail in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 6 and 18).

The appropriate word for contemplation in Sanskrit would be ‘Manan and Chintan’ which will roughly mean ‘deep thought, reflection, pondering and application of mind’. The Upanishads stress on this ‘Chintan-manan’ aspect of the mind-intellect when it talks about ‘Dhyan’. Greatest of scientific discoveries were made more by intuition

than anything else. That is why intuition is closely related to the so-called 'sixth sense' in a man, i.e. a state when the intuitive man knows what is the correct path to choose from a variety of options, and more often than not, he is correct. We can say that this 'intuition' is the guidance provided by the subtle soul/Atma of the creature. Not everybody is equally intuitive by nature; this is because some persons, by virtue of their past actions and deeds have a thicker layer of Vasanas and Vrittis surrounding their Atma while others have a thinner layer so that the voice coming out of the Atma is easily heard in the latter case while it is muzzled and suppressed in the former case.

Definition of Dhyan:- Patanjali Yogsutra has described 'Dhyan' as concentration. Dhyan is that state in which the inner mind tries to see the reality behind things. This 'thinking' process links it with contemplation while concentration function links it with meditation. According to Agni Puran, contemplation with a calm mind is Dhyan while Garud Puran has defined it as concentration on the Brahman. Dhyan, therefore, leads to enlightenment. Woodworth, in his book 'Psychology', writes that the mind concentrates on one impulse at a time and neglects others. So, Dhyan in this context means 'to become alert and activated for doing a work or seeing an object exclusively'. Dhyan is momentary in the beginning, but it becomes permanent later on with practice. Sidney Smith defines Dhyan as 'to forget everything else except the main objective'. Charles Dickens views Dhyan as 'useful, harmless, definite and a beneficial process of the mind'. According to Bergansa, 'suppression of external distractions is essential for the deepening expansion of Dhyan'. Edgar Casey says that 'Dhyan brings to the fore the latent powers of creativity in a person. This creativity improves and enriches his physical, mental and spiritual aspects'. John White in his renowned work 'The meeting of science and spirit' has enumerated many benefits of Dhyan—promotion of physical health, reduction of tension, anxiety and aggressiveness, it leads to self realisation and self improvement and development. He further says that the benefits of meditation are the following—feeling of tranquility, freedom, reduction of tiredness and depression, relief from pains, increase in positive traits such as sympathy and empathy for others, belief in divinity and purity of self etc. Michael Murphy and Steven Donavan, in their research work titled 'The physical and psychological effects of meditation' have mentioned that meditation/Dhyan helps to regulate and control electrical and chemical activity of the brain, the rhythm of the heart, regulates blood pressure, the skin's ability to resist infection and it regulates general metabolism.

Sankaracharya has explained that the many Vedic rituals such as sacrifices had been transformed as mental concepts for contemplation and meditation by Chandogya Upanishad because any defect in the performance of a ritual according to the Vedas, however small and inconsequential, could devalue and derail the whole process. Further, elaborate rituals required huge preparation and expenditure. So he prescribed that meditation was far better, safer and surer means of attaining the same benefits that elaborate sacrifices offered. Contemplation and meditation are equally efficient in spiritual pursuit of the aspirant. Nevertheless, the former (contemplation) has intellect and mind as its main focus while the latter (meditation) concentrates on the mind and body to be effective. Sacrifices, as compared to them, are merely physical rituals.

As is evident, the chariot moves in the proper direction when all the horses are controlled simultaneously. So a holistic and an all-inclusive,

well synchronised and homogenous approach is needed by a seeker/aspirant to attain success in his endeavour to get liberation and deliverance from the horrible torments agitating him as well as to attain emancipation and salvation for its soul from this world.

²*Mental Flux*—The five states of the mind are the following—(i) Kshipta (क्षिप्त), (ii) Mudh (मुद्ध), (iii) Vikshipta (विक्षिप्त), (iv) Ekagra (एकाग्र) and (v) Nirudha (निरुद्ध).

The ‘Kshipta’ is the worst type of the mind characterised by extreme recklessness and restlessness. It is susceptible to various negative traits such as confusion, conflicts, anger, anxiety, worry, tension, agitations of all kinds etc.

The ‘Mudh’ is the dull, inert and indolent state of the mind. These first two states of the mind are predominantly ‘Tamas’ in nature.

The ‘Vikshipta’ state is a ‘distracted’ state of the mind in which it swings between the extremes of calmness and agitation. This is a ‘Rajasic’ quality.

The ‘Ekagra’ state is a focused or concentrated mind. It is a state in which the mind can keep alert and pin-pointed on any subject it is focusing upon. It helps to cultivate discipline in the aspirant.

The ‘Nirudha’ state is that state of the mind in which there is no mental flux of any kind. It is a kind of trance-like state of bliss and happiness. The last two states of the mind are called ‘Satvik’ qualities of the creature.]

अपानेऽस्तंगते प्राणो यावन्नाभ्युदितो हृदि । तावत्सा कुम्भकावस्था योगिभिर्याजुभूयते ॥५१॥

When the ‘Apaan Vayu’ (the wind passing downwards through the anus; the word also refers to self-praise and pride) is withheld inside the body and the Pran Vayu (the wind force that lifts the soul up, the vital force that drives the mind and intellect as well as the heart of the creature; also meaning the wind filling the lungs and driving up the respiratory tract) does not make its presence felt in the heart of the aspirant, the former wind is said to be in a state of control, and this state is known as ‘Khumbhak’. [The word literally means being trapped inside a pot; the pot here refers to the abdomen and intestines. The Apaan Vayu is hot because it is energised by the food eaten by the creature and also because it is especially empowered to help digest the food eaten by the creature, a process that is aided by the latent heat of this wind. When this hot air is trapped inside the body, the comparatively cool wind called the Pran Vayu, which is actually the breath present in the lungs, also gets heated, and once hot, it rises up to get exhaled through the nostrils. This physical process is symbolised by saying that the process of Khumbhak activates the Pran Vayu.] This state is experienced by Yogis (ascetics) (51).

बहिस्तंगते प्राणे यावन्नपान उद्गतः । तावत्पूर्ण समावस्थां बहिष्ठं कुम्भकं विदुः ॥५२॥

On the contrary, when the Pran Vayu is stopped and till the time the Apaan Vayu does not emerge or gets activated, the stage is called ‘Vahaye Kumbhak’ or external incarceration of the vital winds. [It is ‘external’ because the Apaan Vayu has its habitat in the intestines while the Pran is said to have its seat in the heart where the Atma is also said to reside. This fact makes the heart the superior seat of authority and power structure of the creature because the supreme transcendental Lord is represented by the Atma and Pran, and not the Apaan wind. Therefore, holding of the wind outside the heart is virtually ‘external’ for the Atma.] This is the view of wise ones (52).

—
ब्रह्माकारमनोवृत्तिप्रवाहोऽसंकृतिं विना । संप्रज्ञातसमाधिः स्याध्यानाभ्यासप्रकर्षतः ॥५३॥

When ‘Ahankar’ (ego, false pride, haughtiness, arrogance, vanity) is destroyed as a result of prolonged practice of ‘Dhyan’ (concentration and meditation on the absolute truth, the pure nature of the self, treating the Atma as an image of the supreme Brahm and becoming aware of its supreme conscious form), and the latent, natural and inherent tendencies of the mind of the seeker become infused with the glorious and magnificently powerful current of divinity and holiness emanating from the supreme transcendental Brahm, then the state thus obtained by the spiritual seeker/aspirant is called ‘Sampragyat Samadhi’ (a trance-like state of concentration of the mind wherein the soul does not know its true self fully; it does not thoroughly know itself) (53).

—
प्रशान्तवृत्तिकं चित्तं परमानन्ददायकम् । असंप्रज्ञातनामायं समाधिर्योगिनां प्रियः ॥५४॥

When all agitations of the mind and sub-conscious cease, when there is total self realisation by the spiritual seeker/aspirant about his true self, then he gets into a trance-like state called ‘Asampragyat Samadhi’ which gives him supreme bliss, tranquility, peace and happiness. This state is very dear to Yogis (54).

—
प्रभाशून्यं मनःशून्यं बुद्धिशून्यं चिदात्मकम् । अतव्यावृत्तिरूपोऽसौ समाधिर्मुनिभावितः ॥५५॥

In this state, nothing of the outside physical world is felt and experienced because the mind and intellect cease to exist, all tendencies become extinct, all agitations subside, and instead only the pure consciousness survives. The spiritual seeker/aspirant loses awareness of the outside world, and instead remains engrossed in a state of perpetual bliss. During this period, the Buddhi (intellect) is freed from all its worldly Vrittis (encumbrances that accompany attachments to the world, and natural worldly tendencies that are inherent and lying latent in a creature) and it stays in proximity of the pure consciousness called the ‘Chidatma’ (or the eternal, enlightened conscious soul or Atma of the creature). With the elimination of all Vrittis pertaining to this world, the seeker/aspirant finds eternal peace and bliss. This state of beatitude and felicity is called a state of ‘Samadhi’¹ (55).

[Note—¹*Samadhi*—The concept of Samadhi has been already explained in substantial detail as a note to verse no. 2 of this canto above.]

—
ऊर्ध्वपूर्णमधःपूर्णं मध्यपूर्णं शिवात्मकम् । साक्षाद्विधिमुखो ह्येष समाधिः परमार्थिकः ॥५६॥

During Samadhi, the spiritual seeker/aspirant feel totally fulfilled and contented—externally and internally. He becomes an image of Shiva because there are no external desires and aspirations, no worldly hopes and yearnings. Such a person becomes an image of Shiva because he possesses those characteristics that are the hallmarks of this Lord, i.e. he is tranquil, he is self-realised, he is full of bliss and happiness, he is an image of auspiciousness and enlightenment, and he is perpetually in a meditative state. In this state, the mind and heart become free from their natural habit of remaining restless and fickle, and the seeker/aspirant experiences the complete state of Brahm realisation, both externally as well as internally. That is, he experiences and witnesses the existence of the supreme transcendental wholesome Brahm both in the external world as well as inside his own bosom; Brahm is felt everywhere during this period of Samadhi.

This stage of Samadhi is equivalent to emancipation and salvation while still living in this world (because it gives the same bliss and happiness which the creature

obtains on the final merger of his soul with the supreme Brahm after death). It has been proclaimed by Brahm himself. It is, therefore, equivalent to 'Kaivalya Samadhi' or the ultimate bliss which is obtained when the creature realises the only and absolute Truth about his Atma and the supreme Brahm being one and the same (56).

— दृढभावनया_त्यक्तपूर्वापरविचारणम्_।_यदादानं_पदार्थस्य_वासना_सा_प्रकीर्तिता_॥५७॥

Further definition of Vasana:- The tendency of the mind-intellect to firmly accept as the truth the gross and outwardly appearances of any object (i.e. accepting the object of this perishable materialistic world at its face value) instead of determining its true and real nature (i.e. instead of finding the truth behind the illusionary and more often than not misleading façade) is called the fault of the 'Chitta', and it is also the cause of various 'Vasanas' (57).

— भावितं_तीव्रसंवेगादात्मना_यत्तदेव_सः_।_भवस्याशु_कपिश्रेष्ठ_विगतेतरवासनः_॥५८॥
तादृशूषो_हि_पुरुषो_वासनाविवशीकृतः_।_संपश्यति_यदैवैतत्सद्विस्त्विति_विमुह्यति_॥५९॥
वासनावेगवैचित्र्यात्स्वरूपं_न_जहाति_तत्_।_भ्रान्तं_पश्यति_दुर्दृष्टिः_सर्वं_मदवशादिव_॥६०॥

Oh the best amongst the monkeys! The mind-intellect complex comes between the Atma and the gross body of the creature consisting of the sense organs. In other words, the Atma receives the inputs from the outside world through the medium of the organs of perception; these inputs are then monitored by the mind-intellect complex; the brief results of analysis done by the mind-intellect are then passed on to the Atma for its final orders or guidance. [It is like any government organization wherein the chief officer does not deal with routine paper work, which is handled by the lower division clerks, but the file is finally put before him for clearance. The Atma is that chief officer, while the mind is the office clerk and the intellect is the divisional supervisor. The Atma depends upon the feedback of the mind-intellect. If the mind-intellect is already tainted by Vasanas, the Atma would be biased in its decisions. That is why the Atma should not be blamed for the Vasanas that are inherent in a creature. If the wise intellect gets rid of the Vasanas just like a good advisor of a king or the chief officer, the latter would be able to take better decisions.] So the Atma, under the influence of the mind-intellect already tainted by Vasanas, also appears to be influenced by the Vasanas; it appears to possess the Vasanas because the truthful identity of the creature is the Atma and not the mind-intellect or the gross body. So when the creature does anything under the influence of these Vasanas, it obviously seems that it is the Atma that is under the shadow of the Vasanas.

Since the Vasanas are very potent and strong, the Chitta just cannot free itself from their effects; it just cannot shed off its veil representing the various Vasanas. If it manages to free itself from one Vasana, it gets trapped by some other.

Even as an intoxicated man loses sense of what he is doing, the mind-intellect also becomes so deluded by the various Vasanas that it loses all sense of propriety and judgment. It falls into the trap of misconceptions and gets misguided (58-60).

[Note—As we have seen, the Atma has minimal role to play in this setup. However, when the mind, which is saturated with Vasanas like the sponge is in water, interferes with the analysis of the input, the results of the output are also influenced by the Vasanas. When the Vasanas are completely exhausted, the inputs are under direct control of the intellect, which in turn is in direct control, contact and command of the Atma/soul of the creature. Hence, in such a situation, the Atma is able to direct the actions through the medium of the intellect and control the actions of the

creature. Since the Atma is pure, the instruction that it issues are also pure and it leads to righteous actions of the creature. The former type of perceptions by the Atma is called ‘Moha’ (delusions; here the word means biased, distorted and untrue view of the world), while the situation when the Atma is free of all delusions created by the Vasanas is akin to ‘Gyan’. The situation is also like an intoxicated man— though he sees everything around him but his views and perceptions become distorted and out of context]

वासना_द्विविधा_प्रोक्ता_शुद्धा_च_मलिना_तथा_।_मलिना_जन्महेतुः_स्याच्छुद्धा_जन्मविनाशिनी_॥६१॥

Again, Vasanas are of two types—(i) uncorrupt and pure, and (ii) corrupt and impure. The latter throws the creature into the whirlpool of birth and death while the former liberates and helps in its deliverance from it (61).

अज्ञानसुवनाकारा_घनाहंकारशालिनी_।_पुनर्जन्मकरी_प्रोक्ता_मलिना_वासना_बुधैः_।
पुनर्जन्माङ्कुरं_त्यक्त्वा_स्थितिः_संभृष्टबीजवत्_॥६२॥

Wise people say that the impure/corrupt/darkened Vasanas are embodiments of ‘Ahankar’ (pride, ego, haughtiness, arrogance etc.) as well as of ‘Agyan’ (a treasury of ignorance and delusions). This type of Vasanas leads to re-birth (because of unfulfilled desires and aspirations). [Please also see verse no. 3-10 above.] Just like a seed is unable to sprout into a new plant after being roasted, the purging and destruction of Vasanas relevant to this world also prevent re-birth of the creature. Hence, one should be like a roasted seed (62).

बहुशास्त्रकथाकन्थारोमन्थेन_वृथैव_किम्_।_अन्वेष्टव्यं_प्रयत्नेन_मारुते_ज्योति_रान्तरम्_॥६३॥

Oh the son of the Wind God (Hanuman)! What is the benefit of fruitless and endless debates over the scriptures— they are like crushed nuts or gram seeds that do not have any essence left in them and they should be best discarded. The same effort should be diverted inwards towards searching for the inner light of enlightenment, a light which is eternal and provides a solution to the darkness caused by ignorance (63).

दर्शनादर्शने_हित्वा_स्वयं_केवलरूपतः_।_य_आस्ते_कपिशार्दूल_ब्रह्म_स_ब्रह्मावित्स्वयम्_॥६४॥

Oh the lion amongst monkeys (i.e. the chief amongst monkeys— ‘Kapishardul’! Those who are unconcerned about their fame as erudite scholars of scriptures or even of infamy as stupid fellows, and instead concentrate their energy and attention on their inner-self, remaining patiently and silently engrossed in it—they are not only experts in the supreme knowledge of the Brahm but are also deemed to be equivalent to Brahm themselves (64).

अधीत्य_चतुरो_वेदान्सर्वशास्त्राण्यनेकशः_।_ब्रह्मतत्त्वं_न_जानाति_दर्वी_पाकरसं_यथा_॥६५॥

Even after studying the four Vedas and numerous ‘Shastras’ (scriptures), those who do not know the essence of the supreme transcendental enigmatic Brahm are prevented from enjoying supreme bliss, contentedness, tranquility and happiness just like the ladle which does not know the taste of food in spite of it being dipped for a long time in the latter. [The ladle lies submerged in delicious soup or curry for a long time, it even serves others with that food, but it is so lifeless that it does not know the taste of that food.] (65).

स्वदेहाशुचिगन्धेन न विरज्येत यः पुमान् । विरागकारणं तस्य किमन्यदुपदिश्यते ॥६६॥
 अत्यन्तमलिनो देहो देही चात्यन्तनिर्मलः । उभयोरन्तरं ज्ञात्वा कस्य शौचं विधीयते ॥६७॥

Those who do not develop detachment and abhorrence from the gross and perishable body even after smelling the stinking foul smell emanating from it (e.g. the foul odour coming out from a dead body), say, what other knowledge or teaching can be imparted to them so as to create a sense of horror, a sense of total renunciation and detachment from their gross and perishable bodies (which is a bag of such reprehensible things as muscles, cartilage, bones, blood, lymph, mucous, urine, faecal matters, gases and the like). The body is full of filth, while the Atma is very pure and holy. Say, which of the two, the body or the Atma, can be described as pure and holy? (66-67).

बद्धो हि वासनाबद्धो मोक्षः स्पाद्वासनाक्षयः । वासनां संपरित्यज्य मोक्षार्थित्वमपि त्यज ॥६८॥

Those who are tied to various Vasanas (i.e. are yoked to various worldly desires, yearnings, inclinations and attachments) are deemed to be shackled, while those who have destroyed or overcome their Vasanas are deemed to be liberated and delivered. Hence, even the desire to get liberation and deliverance from this world, even the wish for attaining emancipation and salvation should also be abandoned because they are also a form of Vasana. [This is because any form of desire is Vasana; this form of Vasana to get emancipation and salvation is the good type of Vasana, but it is Vasana nevertheless.] (68).

मानसीर्वासनाः पूर्वं त्यक्त्वा विषयवासनाः । मैत्र्यादिवासनानाम्नीर्गृहाणामलवासना ॥६९॥
 ता अप्यतः परित्यज्य ताभिर्व्यवहरन्नपि । अन्तः शान्तः समस्नेहो भव चिन्मात्रवासनः ॥७०॥

To start with, first abandon the Vasanas generated in the mind (such as the very tendency of the mind to seek or desire anything), then those pertaining to the physical body (such as gratification of the sense organs). For this, you should inculcate a strong desire for finding liberation and deliverance for your soul from the traps laid by this deluding and hallucinating world of horrors. Gradually, you should discard even this desire. This will give immense peace and tranquility to you. You should be magnanimous, compassionate and loving towards all. You should concentrate your mind upon your pure and conscious form which is your truthful identity, and which is your Atma (69-70).

तामप्यथ परित्यज्य मनोबुद्धिसमन्विताम् । शेषस्थिरसमाधानो मयि त्वं भव मारुते ॥७१॥

Oh Maruti! At the end, you must forsake from your mind even this desire to concentrate on your pure-self, and consequentially become established in my (Sri Ram's) supreme and divine form (i.e. become one with me, or merge your self with me to become indistinguishable from me) (71).

अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथाऽरसं नित्यमगन्धवञ्च यत् । अनामगोत्रं मम रूपमीदृशं भजस्व नित्यं पवनात्मजातिहन् ॥७२॥

[In these following verses, from verse no.72 to 75, the Lord describes his own divine ethereal form.]

Oh the son of the Wind God! You must worship my divine form which is indescribable and is beyond the reach of words and comprehension. It cannot be touched or felt, is formless and attributeless, is bland and without any smell or body odour like an ordinary creature, is never corrupted and tarnished in anyway, is without

any designation or name or clan or caste or creed, and which is the eliminator of all the sorrows, miseries, troubles, tribulations and torments of the creature (72).

—
दृशिस्वरूपं गगनोपमं परं सकृद्विभातं त्वजमेकमक्षरम् । अलेपकं सर्वगतं यदद्वयं तदेव चाहं सकलं
विमुक्त ॐ ॥७३॥

Oh Hanuman! He who is the witness to all and for all, he who is fathomless and measureless like the sky, he whose knowledge leaves nothing more to be learnt, he who is without a birth or a beginning, he who is one and only one of his kind and unique, he who is unattached and dispassionate in every way, he who has no encumbrances whatsoever, he who is all-pervading and all-encompassing, is omnipresent uniformly and universally in the entire creation, he who is the best and the most exalted entity in creation, he who is the personification of the three divine syllables of the holy and ethereal word OM (i.e. A, U, M) and at the same time beyond their purview and reach, he who cannot be subjected to any kind of fractionalisation (i.e. he who cannot be partitioned, divided, fractured or structured into separate segments or compartments, even for the purpose of study), he who is the non-dual essence of creation and everything that exists, he who is the essential nature of things, he who is the embodiment of the primordial primary sound ‘OM’ from which the whole creation is said to have evolved, and he who is the imperishable and eternal Brahm— oh Hanuman, it is me! (73).

—
दृशिस्तु शुद्धोऽहमविक्रियात्मको न मेऽस्ति कश्चिद्विषयः स्वभावतः ।
पुरस्तिरश्चोर्ध्वमधश्च सर्वतः सुपूर्णभूमाहमितीह भावय ॥७४॥

I am the neutral ‘seer’ who sees everything (i.e. I am a witness and an dispassionate observer of all), I am immaculate and an embodiment of purity and incorruptness, I never become tainted or subjected to the denigrating effects of any worldly faults (i.e. I am blemish less, taintless and beyond reproach), and there is nothing in this world that can become the object of my own attention, that can delude me and attract my attention. I am complete in myself—above and below, inside and outside! Oh Hanuman! You must contemplate and meditate upon this form of mine (74).

—
अजोऽमरश्चैव तथाऽजरोऽमृतः स्वयंप्रभः सर्वगतोऽहमव्ययः ।
न कारणं कार्यमतीत्य निर्मलः सदैव तृप्तोऽहमितीह भावय ॥७५॥

You must steadily contemplate on my divine form which I shall describe to you now—I am unborn and eternal, I am free from decay and destruction, I am an embodiment of the ambrosia of eternity and bliss, and therefore am nectar-like, I am self-illuminated and self-radiant, I am omnipresent and all-pervading, I am faultless and beyond reproach, I am imperishable and without any cause or reason for coming into existence, I am beyond the purview of every deed and action and their consequences (because as the supreme Brahm I do not get involved in any deed or action), and I am an embodiment of eternal purity and contentment (75).

—
जीवमुक्तपदं त्यक्त्वा स्वदेहे कालसात्कृते । विशत्यदेहमुक्तत्वं पवनोऽस्पन्दतामिन ॥
तदेतदृचाभ्युक्तम्—तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः । दिवीव चक्षुराततम् ॥ तद्विप्रासो
विपन्यवो जागृवांसः समिन्धते । विष्णोर्यत्परमं पदम् ॥७६॥ सत्वमित्युपनिषत् ॥७६॥

In due course of time, when you will shed your mortal coil (body), you will abandon your above state of being renunciate while alive and obtain the final

salvation of your soul by merging yourself with me. This would happen because your Atma will leave your body with the Pran (the vital breath which is exhaled from the body) at the time of your death without the least effort. The Pran wind would coalesce with the wind element uniformly and universally present outside your body in the entire cosmos. Thereby you would become one with the supreme Brahm who is universal and omnipresent in the universe like the wind is present in the sky.

This fact is also ratified by the Vedas, which assert—‘Wise and intelligent seeker/aspirant always look towards that heavenly and divine abode of Vishnu which is radiant, splendorous and glorious like the light of the brilliant Sun in the sky; it is eternal, all encompassing and spread in all the directions of the universe even as the sunlight spreads and covers all the corners of the sky. Those wise, erudite and enlightened seekers/aspirants who are selfless, vigilant and diligent in their spiritual practices reach there and enhance the glory and splendour of that abode by their own glory and majesty when they reach there. That holy and divine abode is called the abode of Lord Vishnu. This supreme abode is attainable by selfless seekers/aspirants only, and not by those who have worldly interests and attachments as well as by those who are bogged down by delusions and ignorance. Those who believe in it and become aware of it are able to get its rewards. This is the Great Upanishad. OM Salutations! Amen!’ (76).

[Note—The reader will have come across the concept of good and bad Vasanas (worldly desires, passions, lust and yearnings. A brief explanation will be worthwhile here.

(a) ‘Sat Guna or quality’ is the noble, virtuous, auspicious and good qualities present in a creature, (b) ‘Raj Guna or quality’ pertains to worldly passions, desires and ambition etc., while (c) ‘Tam Guna or quality’ is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men —might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three ‘Gunas’ and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The Satwic quality or Guna is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

The Rajsic quality or Guna can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality.

Rajasic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

The Tamsic quality or Guna covering the soul is like a foetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

Satvik tendencies are the best tendencies amongst the three. They are positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc. Rajasic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, passions, selfishness, obsession, expansion etc. The Tamsic tendencies are the worst types leading to vices, perversions, delusions, deception, gloom, anger, ignorance et al.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajasic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

The first quality of Sattva is concerned with creation and enhancement of knowledge and wisdom. For this, one has to remain alert and vigilant like Brahma. The Jagrat state also corresponds to that state when the creature is awake and interacts physically with the external world, imbibes whatever knowledge and information that comes to it, gains experience, and physically reacts to that knowledge and information. Further, such people are regarded as seniors in society, and they are best depicted in the form of the old patriarch Brahma. They remain so engrossed in the world that they forget who they actually are, what their true identity is, and the very basic fact that what they are thinking as the real is actually not.

Next comes the Swapna state in which a man dreams, and it is a metaphor for imagination and visualization of things based on the experience and knowledge gained during the Jagrat state. In this state a man lives and does things in a virtual manner in a virtual world of dreams. He sustains and nourishes his imaginations, fantasies and conceptions in a world of dreams which is far away from the harsh realities of life in the physical world. He suffers and enjoys in his dreams, then when he wakes up, he sometimes forgets what that imaginary world was like, but at other times there have been incidents wherein he has got new insight and new inspiration while he was dreaming. This is how Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation created by Brahma. For all practical purposes, a dreaming man appears to be in a state resembling the state of Samadhi, or a state when an aspirant is in deep meditation and engrossed in contemplation, because he remains aloof and oblivious to the external world, and remains absolutely motionless. But this state is temporary, because he would revert back or wake up to the Jagrat state. That is why Lord Vishnu, who represents this

quality of Raj, is depicted as perpetually reclining contemplatively on the bed of the coiled legendary serpent floating on the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar. Since without a vision and imagination one cannot grow, develop and rise, Vishnu is regarded as a maverick player of fantastic tricks in order to sustain and enhance his interests of looking after the creation. Out of these Trinity Gods, it is Vishnu who assumes so many forms and adopts so many tricks to do the needful.

The third quality of Tam is represented by Shiva, and that is why he shows certain traits which are so typical of this quality—viz. being short tempered, and destroying at the shortest notice; his external behaviour and attire also represents the excess of this lowest quality in him. The Sushupta state that he represents stands for being totally oblivious of the external world, and remaining in total bliss. This is exactly how Shiva has been depicted—he remains in a perpetual state of meditation, completely indifferent to the external world, unconcerned and detached from the attractions of the enchanting outside when he can find complete bliss inside his own bosom. The Tam quality marks the presence of ignorance in a greater ratio, and this is depicted by Shiva when he remains ignorant of the niceties of worldly behaviour, notwithstanding his exalted stature of being the greatest amongst the Gods.

To understand how the three Gunas affect the Atma, let's take two examples—that of the red hot piece of iron glowing with heat, and the potter moulding various pots from the same clod of earth.

The Atma subjects the *Bhoot Atma* to the 'radiation' of these 'Gunas'. These 'Gunas' are the three basic qualities present in all the creatures in different permutations and combinations. These 'Gunas' effect the 'Bhoot Atma' differently based on a number of factors—such as for example, the present status of the 'Bhoot Atma' vis-à-vis its past deeds, their cumulative affects, the caliber of its mind and intellect, the position it occupies in the ladder of spiritual evolution, its willingness to change or subject itself to the effects of such radiation etc.

The concept can be understood differently also. A piece of iron, when heated, shows the heat as a 'red hot glow' which fully pervades the iron piece and becomes an integral part of it. The whole piece appears to be one whole mass of something which is red, hot and glowing. When beaten by a hammer, the iron piece bends and can be shaped into any shape. Each new shape, when heated, will show the same glow of red hot fire inside it. Similarly, the Atma provides consciousness to the creature, making it active and lively, subject to receptions of stimuli in the form of various perceptions originating in the external world and received through the organs of perception present in the gross body. The 'heated' body (i.e. the Bhoot Atma made active by the Atma) now becomes susceptible to change (from the impact of the three Gunas) much like the heated piece of iron being hammered by the hammer. The 'hammering' by the three 'Gunas' (the inherent qualities present in every creature) help to cast the individual creature into various moulds or shapes having different characteristics. Even as cold iron is not easily malleable, the creature without the infusion of life injected into it by the Atma is as good as dead and is the least malleable. Here, the allegory is simple—the creature is the iron, the glowing consciousness is the fire, the impinging 'Gunas' is the blow of the hammer, and the Atma is the iron smith.

The wheel of the potter moulds the clay into various shapes, but the driving force of the wheel is the potter. Similarly, the three 'Gunas' mould the characteristic of the creature, but the Atma is the authority,

the potter in this allegory, who drives the three 'Gunas'. Just as the potter is not the wheel, the Atma is not affected by the three 'Gunas', it is just an instrument, an implement to shape the character of the creature. Again, even as a wheel is needed by a potter to give shape to a shapeless clod of clay, the Atma needs the three Gunas to mould the characters of the creatures that constitute this creation.

The concept of Gunas affecting the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, especially Maitrayanyu Upanishad, cantos 2-4 of the Sam Veda tradition. Nearly all the Upanishads expound on the subject, and the chief amongst them, besides the above, are the Chandogya and Brihad Aranyak Upanishads, an English version of which by this humble author has been published separately.

The concept that 'I', or the person's true identity, is the gross body and not the 'pure conscious soul' leads to ignorance-based ego and a sense of false pride called Ahankar. When the creature is constantly under the deluding concept of 'I' being the gross body which interacts with this world, it inculcates a sense of possessiveness about the materialistic world in the creature. 'Pure consciousness' mired by ego becomes 'a conditioned consciousness' and fails to remain pure.

This is why ego and pride, called Ahankar, has been likened to a minister of the king; it directs and regulates the actions of the consciousness which, under its influence, loses its independence much like the king who depends upon his ministers for all his major decisions because it is the minister who advises and gives the basic feed back to the king to enable him to make a decision.

This 'conditioned consciousness'—working through the mind-intellect-ego combine is called, inter-alia, 'Chitta'. The word also means 'attention and memory'. Hence, this memory acts as a referral library for the intellect. The latter falls back on it and rely on it whenever it is in doubt. The quality of books in the library guides the student; similarly, the quality of inherent tendencies stored in the library of Chitta directly affects the inputs of the intellect, and through it, the mind and successively down the hierarchy to the body and its organs of perception and action.

Although the soul has nothing to do with this command chain (i.e. paying of attention to various inputs and stimuli originating in the outside world, leading to the accumulation of data in the memory bank—the inherent and latent tendencies, passions and inclinations present in a creature (the creature's Vasanas) as well as its ego and a sense of pride (called the creature's Ahankar) that effect the thinking process of the mind and the intellect—the resultant orders issued by the intellect-mind apparatus to the body to take relevant action—the consequences and results of these action and deeds done by the body under the command of the mind and intellect—accumulation of more experience which is stored in the memory—and the chain continues), but for all practical purposes the Atma/soul, which is the true identity of a creature and pure consciousness, is deemed responsible for everything because of its sovereign nature even as a king is held responsible for all that happens in his kingdom, and he just cannot absolve himself of any and all misdeeds done by any of his subjects and subordinates on the plea that they personally should be held responsible for their actions; it is the duty of a righteous king to ensure that everything goes on right in his kingdom.

So Sri Ram advises Hanuman here to delineate this conscious soul from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through.

The enlightened soul is akin to the lighted wick of a candle, while the layers of Vasanas are like the sheets of plastic— some black, some colourless and others colourful—surrounding the light emanating from the candle. So, removal of the Vasanas is like removing the various veils from around the candle so that its light can shine brilliantly through in all the directions and slice through the darkness of the room and illuminate all the corners of it.

Generally speaking, the drag of Vasanas and Vrittis (i.e. inherent tendencies, notions, innate habits, desires, yearnings etc.) of a creature, which create a hindrance in its contact with the pure self, can be overcome by the following four methods—(i) Method of persuasion—the creature tries to convince itself through reasoning, discrimination, self analysis and gentle prodding that its true identity is not the body but the soul or Atma which is the real and truthful self. (ii) Method of purification—the creature loves itself so much that its mind is blocked from all other love. This can be purged by thinking of the wider world as the beautiful extension of the self. Thus, selfishness is gradually reduced and it is replaced by love, compassion and graciousness. (iii) Method of eradication of desires—this can be done by selfless action and removal of ego. (iv) Method of forceful confrontation—the seeker should confront its mind about its wayward behaviour and force it to overcome past habits and tendencies. Efforts should be made to control the mind's restlessness—diligently, courteously and persistently.]

Shanti-Paath/शान्तिपाठ

ॐ_पूर्णमदः_पूर्णमिदं_पूर्णात्_पूर्णमुदच्यते_।_पूर्णस्य_पूर्णमादाय_पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते_॥

_____ॐ_शान्तिः_!_शान्तिः_!!_शान्तिः_!!!_

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Appendix—1

Shanti Paath of the Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads

ॐ_पूर्णमदः_पूर्णमिदं_पूर्णात्_पूर्णमुदच्यते_।_पूर्णस्य_पूर्णमादाय_पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते_॥_

_____ॐ_शान्तिः_!_शान्तिः_!!_शान्तिः_!!!_

om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṁ pūrṇātpūrṇamudacyatē /
pūrṇasya pūrṇa-mādāya pūrṇamēvāvaśiṣyatē //

om śāntiḥ! śāntiḥ!! śāntiḥ!!!

The Shanti Paath has the following meaning—‘OM salutations! The supreme Lord, who is represented by the cosmic and divine word symbol OM, is complete and absolute in all respects. This whole cosmos is wholly and completely encompassed and pervaded by him (i.e. the supreme Brahm uniformly pervades in this whole creation even as water is uniformly present in wet sponge). This whole world, with its myriad forms, has originated from that one, single, immutable, whole, complete and indivisible entity. In spite of this, that whole, complete and indivisible entity (Brahm) remains as such, that is, one, single, immutable, whole, complete and indivisible.

[That is, in spite of this world coming into being from it, that whole entity is not diminished even a bit.]

Even when he is hypothetically separated from this creation, he still remains whole, complete and indivisible.

[That is, Brahm cannot be partitioned or fractured or divided in any way. Whether he is treated as a separate entity or as an integral part of the cosmos, his form and nature remains essentially the same; he is unique in this aspect. This is a reference to the non-dual nature of the supreme Brahm.]

OM! Let there be peace for us; let there be peace for us; let there be peace for us!

[That is, let our three torments, called the Traitaps, be calmed down. The so-called Traitaps are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age etc; due to other worldly creatures such as fear from the king, thieves etc.; and due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods.]

Let us have peace. Let us have peace. Let us have peace.’

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Appendix—2

Madhu Sukta

(Also known as ‘Madhu Vidya’)

The ‘Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad’ of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, Brahmin 5, describes the so-called ‘Madhu Vidya’ in which it is narrated how each basic and essential element of creation plays a central role in the life of the creature. Each of these quintessential elements of creation, without exception, has the uniform presence of a single universal factor that gives it and all other entities their importance and value. This supreme factor is the pure consciousness which lends life and vitality to each creature in this creation. It is compared to honey because even as honey is the refined product of nectar collected from a wide variety of flowers because it is the purest, best and concentrated natural source that provides energy, health, vitality and strength to the creature, it is the universal rejuvenator and sustainer for all, this consciousness is also the best thing that is available to the creature. It is the driving force and the powerhouse of creation, both at the micro level of the individual creature, as well as at the macro level of the entire creation.

Hence, that knowledge which pertains to this consciousness, also called the Atma, is known as ‘Madhu Vidya’. The hymn dedicated to it is therefore called ‘Madhu Sukta’.

Madhu Vidya appears in Atharva Veda’s ninth Kanda (division, section or chapter) in the form of twenty four hymns, called a Sukta (a prayer, an invocation of a deity) which are dedicated to Madhu Kasha (literally meaning a honeycomb). The Rishi (the seer who first revealed it) is Atharva; and its Devta (patron deity who presides over the Sukta) are Madhu and Aswinikumars.

The Madhu Kasha here is envisioned as the holy cow because the basic life sustaining, energizing, invigorating, rejuvenating and nourishing nutrients present in milk produced by her are very similar to the basic properties of honey. Even as honey is the refined extract of nectar collected from various flowers made ready for consumption by the creature by the untiring efforts of the honeybee, the production of milk is also the result of the untiring effort of Mother Nature in her manifestation of a cow to provide the basic life-sustaining nourishment to her off springs in the form of the myriad creatures that inhabit this planet by extracting the basic nutrients from all sorts of herbs and plants grown on earth and eaten by the cow, and then transferring them to milk secreted by her. Just like honey that drips from a full honeycomb, milk too drips from the filled udders of a healthy cow.

The milk of the cow has also been likened to the Som, the invigorating and sanctified liquid used during formal fire sacrifices as offerings made to Gods, as well as a holy drink to be drunk by the participants and devotees at such ceremonies.

This is why a cow has been regarded as the personification of Mother Nature which harbours the entire creation in its womb, because she also provides for its food and drink in the form of milk, as it is well established that milk is a complete and wholesome food for all. In her form, the supreme Lord has produced the ‘honeycomb’ that would secrete the ‘honey’ in the form of the sweet and wholesome drink called the milk for the creation created by it. This milk is the symbolic nectar of life for the creature.

The ‘Ashwinikumars’ are the physicians of the Gods, and therefore they are requested to ensure that the patron who uses this Sukta as a medium of prayer is always well provided for, well nourished and kept healthy with an easy availability of a life sustaining and nourishing liquid in the form of milk. ‘Madhu’ is the personified form of the eclectic qualities of milk, such as its sweetness and succulence, as well as its energizing and rejuvenating properties that resemble those of honey.

Regular use of this Sukta for prayer ensures that the aspirant is blessed with all the best that is available in this creation as represented by the honey and milk which are metaphors for sweetness, succulence, juice, and a concentrated and refined form of all the best life sustaining nutrients that are available in this world. A person who uses this Sukta derives the same benefits that accrue to the person who is fortunate enough to eat honey and drink milk regularly. He remains in robust health and enjoys life in all its sweetness while imbibing all the good virtues of creation just like a man who eats honey and drinks milk becomes healthy by imbibing all the goodness and sweetness inherent in them.

The parallel between the milk as being the honey or Madhu of life and the pure consciousness too being the honey for all the creatures is very obvious. Just like the milk is the only and complete sustainer of an infant child who fully depends upon the mother’s milk for its sustenance, the pure consciousness present in a creature is equally necessary for the creature’s sustenance. Without this consciousness, no creature would keep living, and therefore the creature’s value and worthiness depends directly on this quintessential single factor. Similarly, the essential qualities present in any of the elements of creation are like its ‘honey’ because it is these latent virtues hidden in this element which gives it its importance, significance and value.

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1. The ‘Madhu Kasha’ (literally the honeycomb but here referring to the holy cow who gives milk which is as sweet as honey) is born or created out of the combination or union of the fundamental elements of creation, viz. the Duloka (heavens representing the goodness and divine virtues that are available with the Gods), the Antariksha (sky, space—indicating the all round nourishing abilities of milk and to indicate that it has the potential to harbour and sustain every single creature in creation, because everything in existence lives in the space of the sky and not outside it), the Prithivi (earth, because the food from which essential nutrients and medicinal ingredients needed for the nourishment, good health and sustenance of the creature are extracted and then transferred to the milk when the cow eats those foods and herbs that are grown on earth), water element (in the form of its vast and endless reservoir called the ocean), fire element (representing energy, dynamism, vigour and vitality), and air element (which produces bubbles and froth in the milk, and makes it swell up and spill over when heated; used as a metaphor for life; also known as ‘Pran’ because anything that has life would show movement and activity).

By duly worshipping and paying obeisance to that Madhu Kasha (cow) who bears this nectar and elixir of life (i.e. milk), all the creatures get immense happiness and joy; they feel exhilarated and cheerful. [It is but natural that with a nourishing sweet and nectar like drink to imbibe, the creatures would feel contented and happy.] (1).

2. Her (cow’s) milk is symbolic of this entire world, and it is the essence of what is known as the ocean. [This has reference to the fact that the ocean harbours in its

bosom a huge marine ecosystem, complete with animal and plant life. It is the water which is the primary and most essential ingredient for life, for all life forms have originated on this earth because there is abundant water in it in the form of the vast and fathomless ocean. Life depends upon water in some or the other form. Milk is also a manifestation of water in its best life-sustaining form.]

The Pran (the signs of life represented by the breath and the ability of a man to speak; the vital air or wind element symbolising breath and other vital winds in the body which sustain life in a creature) is represented by the mooing sound made by the milk-bearing cow as she moves around on this earth. It is this Pran (the vital wind or air element) that flows through and fills up the entire world. [The Pran is like milk and honey for the entire creation because without air no life can be sustained; everything would suffocate to death without air. Without wind, there would be no movement of clouds and therefore no rains. The earth would consequently parch to death.] (2).

3. Her glorious and magnificent virtues, her divine and eclectic attributes, and her legendary qualities are deeply studied, diligently researched and unraveled to the best of their understanding and abilities by many people in different ways on this earth (in this world). [That is, no single version is complete, and no single version is either wrong or right when compared to the other version because they all elucidate and expound upon the same entity but form different angles and perspectives of the quintessential Truth. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the supreme Brahm, the eternal Truth, has been narrated by so many sages and seers in so many different ways that it creates ambiguity and doubt in the mind of those who do not understand the underlying essence and the crux of the matter. They do not understand that the same Truth is being told but from different view points, and therefore there should be no vexations, no confusions, no doubts, no debates, no schisms and no dichotomy of any kind.]

This symbolic Madhu Kasha has been born out of the union or conjunction of the Agni (fire element representing energy, vitality and latent vital spark of life inherent in any thing that is alive) and Vayu (the air element). She is the robust and strong daughter of the Maruts (the Wind Gods). [That is the reason why milk swells and boils over when heated. It is also the reason why it produces gastric uneasiness by creating wind in the intestines in some people with low vitality and intolerance to milk.] (3).

4. This symbolic cosmic holy cow represented by the Madhu Kasa is the mother of Aditya (the Sun God), and the daughter of Vasu (a diving God having eight subordinate gods under him—such as the patron gods of gems, gold, wealth, fire, water, radiance and splendour, and holy and pious people. She is like the Pran or someone very dear and near to all the subjects of creation, because she sustains them and takes care of them by way of providing them with the elixir of life called Amrit in the form of milk.

This Madhu Kasha (holy cow) is of a golden complexion, and she spreads or sprinkles Ghee (clarified butter) everywhere. [Milk produced by the cow is rich in butter, and its sprinkling is a symbolic reference to the water being sprinkled on the ground in the form of the rain falling upon the earth, or the watering of the land by the rivers and streams, to make the earth fertile and rich in vibrant life forms. Liquid butter is the most wholesome and rich fluid extract of milk, and its availability to the creature is like the earth getting water to remain moist, well nourished, and able to

sustain healthy and vibrant forms of flora and fauna. Even as those who are fortunate enough to drink wholesome milk rich in butter are visibly well nourished, healthy and robust as is evident in their all round health, a glowing skin as well as in their bubbling energy, vitality and stamina, the earth where there is plenty of water is rich in verdant, vibrant green vegetation, and active, healthy animal life as compared to arid areas of the earth such as deserts and parched land where there is no rain or river.] (4).

5. The Gods have made this ‘Kasha of Madhu’ (literally a cell or a treasury of honey represented by milk bearing cow). This world is like her infant (calf). This mother takes care of her young one. As soon as the offspring is born, it surveys the world around it (5).

6. Who knows of it? Who is aware of it? Who thinks and ponders about it? Brahma (the creator of the visible world), who is endowed with excellent intelligence and wisdom, who possesses excellent understanding and erudition, derives immense joys, pleasures and bliss by having access to the symbolic pitcher full of Som (nectar-like divine liquid of eternity and bliss drunk by Gods) located near her (divine cow’s) heart. [This refers symbolically to fact that Brahma is Brahm-realised and aware of the presence of the Atma in the subtle space of the heart of all living beings.] (6).

7. He (Brahma) knows of it; he is aware of it; he understands about it. The udders from which thousands of endless and never-ending streams (of nectar-like milk representing Som, the elixir of eternal life) flow are milked by him, and their succulent juice or liquid (milk) which has the virtues of strength, vitality and vigour packed uniformly in it as its integral quality, is continuously collected by him. [In this verse, the milk is compared to knowledge and wisdom of the highest quality. Even as both milk and honey are treated as a metaphor for all that is best in creation, the knowledge of the pure conscious Atma as well as of Brahm is regarded as the best form of spiritual knowledge. That is why the creator is known as ‘Brahma’—the ‘Brahm-realised one’.] (7).

8. She (the cow) is the one who bellows loudly, gives (i.e. helps in the production of) food, and occupies an exalted position where excellent vows and resolutions are kept. She keeps the three Yagyas (religious fire sacrifices) under her jurisdiction. [That is, all the three fire sacrifices need the ingredients produced by the cow, such as the clarified butter, milk and curd, along with Som and honey, all of which are equally important and needed for successful completion of any sacrifice.] She is able to symbolically measure the Sun. [That is, she is as potent and powerful, as important and significant for creation as the Sun. The Sun God known as Aditya is her offspring—see verse no. 4. Hence, like any other mother, she is able to overcome the powerful Sun God; the latter remains under her command.] She provides milk in the form of streams. [Here referring to the stream of rain falling from the sky as well as the rivers streaming down from the mountains to water and make the land fertile.] (8).

9. Just like a strong bull rushes (towards the cow), the gushing waters (of the rivers etc.) fed by torrential rain rush towards those who would then drink it and be satisfied. This water would then provide sufficient strength, stamina, vitality and energy in the form of nourishing food. [The ‘water’ here is the knowledge of the supreme Brahm, the Truth of creation. In other words, when the eclectic knowledge of Brahm is

acquired by a spiritual aspirant, his inner-self finds nourishment. This Brahm-realisation gives spiritual nourishment to those who are well versed in that supreme 'Tattva', i.e. to those who have realised the true essence of Brahm and the pure conscious Atma.] (9).

10. Oh Prajapati (the caretaker and Lord of his subjects, the creation)! The rumbling and thundering clouds are your voice. You are strong and powerful, and you transfer these virtues to the world efficiently. [This refers to the bolt of lightening that strikes the earth during severe thunder storms.]

The Madhu Kasha has been born as a union of Marut (the Wind God) and Agni (the Fire God). She is the active and strong daughter of the Maruts. [Here, the Wind God is the father, and the Fire God is regarded as the mother. This symbolism is derived from the fact that the wind is an active principle in the formation and movement of clouds, while the rains that fall upon the earth are like offerings that are put in the fire pit during a formal fire sacrifice. The fruit of this sacrifice is the cow which is like the pitcher of an endless supply of nectar-like and honey-like sweet, nourishing and life sustaining milk.] (10).

11. Oh Ashwinikumars! Just like the invigorating and sanctified drink called Som gives you immense pleasure, energy and strength when drunk by you during the sacred rituals called 'Praataha-Savan' (literally the first sacrament) held at dawn, let my Atma (pure consciousness) also be blessed with the same energy and vigour, the same joy and ecstasy as derived by you. [That is, let me get the same pleasure, the same bliss, the same vigour, the same energy and the same stamina by drinking milk as you derive from drinking Som during the religious sacrament or fire sacrifice done during the morning hours.] (11).

[Note--In other words, let me be happy and exhilarated that I have been fortunate enough to be provided with the invigorating and honey-like milk to drink. This milk has been made rich with all the best of extracts from medicinal herbs and other essential nutrients in creation which are necessary to maintain healthy, robust and vibrant life forms in this world. The milk is a ready-made drink created by the creator for the wholesome sustenance of his subjects. It contains all the essential elements, vitamins, minerals etc. in a well balanced ratio which are conducive to maintenance of good health and a robust, vigorous and strong body of the creature who drinks it. In fact, one can survive on milk for a long time without losing energy and strength. In the same way, the spiritual aspirant derives immense strength and a sense of contentment by focusing his attention of the Atma which is pure consciousness and a fountainhead of bliss, beatitude and felicity.]

12. Oh Indra (the king of Gods) and Agni (the Fire God)! Just like the invigorating and sanctified drink called Som gives you immense pleasure, energy and strength when drunk by you during the sacred rituals called 'Dwitiya-Savan' (literally the second sacrament) held at noon, let my Atma (pure consciousness) also be blessed with the same energy and vigour, the same joy and ecstasy as derived by you. [That is, let me get the same pleasure, the same bliss, the same vigour, the same energy and the same stamina by drinking milk as you derive from drinking Som during the religious sacrament or fire sacrifice done during the noon time. Let my Atma be as radiant, as splendidous and as glorious as the mid-day Sun. Let me reach the zenith of spiritual achievements just like the Sun at noon.] (12).

13. Oh Ribhu (one of the junior Gods)! Just like the invigorating and sanctified drink called Som gives you immense pleasure, energy and strength when drunk by you during the sacred rituals called ‘Tritiya-Savan’ (literally the third sacrament) held at dusk, let my Atma (pure consciousness) also be blessed with the same energy and vigour, the same joy and ecstasy as derived by you. [That is, let me get the same pleasure, the same bliss, the same vigour, the same energy and the same stamina by drinking milk as you derive from drinking Som during the religious sacrament or fire sacrifice done during the noon time. The tired creature retires at sunset to relax and rejuvenate after a day of hard toil. Likewise, let my Atma find peace and final rest after the long journey through life.] (13).

14. Oh Fire God! I would produce honey; let me have access to honey. [In other words, I will study the scriptures, hear wise men speak, gather all information I can, and then digest it to filter out the unnecessary things. I will extract the eclectic Truth from all information and knowledge that is available. This is a metaphoric way of saying ‘I would produce honey’. So, bless me and empower me so that I can access the spiritual Truth in my life.] Bless me with energy, vitality, vigour and strength. I have brought milk (to be offered to you and the fire sacrifice for this purpose). [In other words, I have brought milk to be offered to the sacred fire and hereby invoke the blessings of the Fire God so that this milk turns out to be as good as honey for me. When I drink this milk, let it appear to be as sweet, invigorating, energizing and succulent as pure honey.] (14).

15. Oh Fire God! Bless and empower me with Tej (energy, vitality, vigour, strength, glory, majesty and radiance), Praja (subjects; family, kith and kin; friends and compatriots) and Aayu (a long life). Let all the Gods recognise and know me; let Indra along with the Rishis (sages) too recognise and know me. [In other words, I pray to the Fire God to give me sufficient glory and fame that the Gods and their king, Indra, come to know about me; let them recognise that I have greatness in me and I possess certain potentials that others do not have, because great people recognise only those who have certain unique excellent qualities, abilities and virtues in them. Let me be possessed of such noble virtues and qualities that besides the Gods and Indra, even the exalted sages recognise me and acknowledge my potentials and glories. Let me stand out from the crowd and acquire an exalted stature.] (15).

16. Oh Ashwinikumars! Even as the honeybees collect and store all the available sweetness and succulence along with all the other eclectic and divine qualities that give the honey its unique glorious value and profound importance, let my Gyan (knowledge, wisdom, erudition and skills), Tej (energy, radiance, glory and majesty), Bal (strength, powers, punch and authority) and Virya (vitality, virility, stamina, vigour and potentials) accumulate and develop steadily and in an exponential manner. [That is, let my knowledge and wisdom, my energy and radiance, my strength and potentials, and my stamina and vitality increase day by day. Let me, as a consequence, acquire great respect, honour, dignity and high position in society just like honey which is held in high esteem and respected by all as one of the best forms of food available to the creature, a food which contains all the goodness that one expects from anything to eat. Let me attain the zenith of spiritual enlightenment.] (16).

17. Oh Ashwinikumars! Even as the honeybees go on adding new honey to their earlier collection so as to continuously enhance their treasury of honey, let my Gyan,

Tej, Bal and Virya (as described in pervious verse) get accumulated and enhanced; let these virtues increase day by day in me (17).

18. Let me possess all the eclectic qualities (such as energy, vitality, vigour, virility, strength, stamina, radiance, cheerfulness etc. that come with abundance of food to eat, a healthy environment, a robust health and having nothing to worry about along with other such virtues) that are seen in abundance in cows and horses who have a chance to graze freely on mountain sides and hills, as well as in the sweetness, the invigorating life-sustaining virtues and other eclectic qualities that are present in the rain that falls down upon the earth from the clouds. [In other words, let me continuously increase my knowledge and wisdom; let my erudition and skills continue to enhance day by day.] (18).

19. Oh Ashwinikumars who take care of and sustain the eclectic virtues of auspiciousness and virtuousness! [That is, these twin Gods are the patron Gods of these qualities.] Provide me access to the honey of the honeybees so that I have sufficient energy to speak enthusiastically to all the people in an energetic way, using a vigorous, loud, clear, articulate and robust voice. [That is, let there be energy and punch in what I speak. Give me sufficient energy so that I can speak in the public with vigour and stamina, let me become an excellent orator, let me not falter, fumble and demur while speaking because I fail to remember what to talk about, let me speak in an articulate, coherent and cogent manner, let me not suffer from stammering and other such defects of speech, let me not feel exhausted and fatigued with loss of energy while speaking, let me not speak meekly and in a shy and guilty manner, let me not give the impression while speaking that I am not certain of my self, let me not feel lost for words once I get up to address a gathering, etc.] (19).

20. Oh Prajapati! You are strong and powerful, and your voice is the loud thundering and rumbling of the clouds. You shower such virtues as strength, stamina, potentials, vigour and vitality on the earth and the sky in the form of the rain. All the animals depend on this rain for their sustenance and well being, and it is the rain that acts like the nectar that enhances and fills the world with the life sustaining food and its essential juices (nutrients) (20).

21. This (honeycomb symbolised by the rain bearing clouds) has the Prithivi (the earth) as its central rod (the supporting branch from which this comb dangles—here referring to the fact that the earth is from where the clouds are formed, it is the earth around which the clouds move, and it is the earth on which the rains falls, thereby making the earth central to the importance and existence of the rain and the clouds that bear it), the Antaraiksha (the sky) is its middle part (i.e. the main body of the honeycomb, because it is in the sky that the clouds are located), the Duloka (the heavens) is the internal cellular structure (where this symbolic honey is stored; here referring to the inner structure of the clouds where the rain drops are actually located), the Vidyut (electric in the form of electric or lightening) symbolises its threads (the sticky part of the honey, indicating the degree of its pureness and viscosity; here indicating the potent of the rainy clouds because it is only in the thick bank of dark clouds rich in rain that lightening is present), and the golden drops (of rain) themselves are like goblets of molten gold (here signifying the immense value of rain, with each drop of it being equivalent in value to a goblet of molten gold) (21).

22. Those who are aware of the seven symbolic forms that this honey in the metaphoric honeycomb takes are said to have easy access to this honey. [That is, such people are blessed with the good fortune of having or possessing all of these seven assets representing these seven symbolic forms of the honey.] These seven forms that this honey takes are the following—Brahmins (the wise and learned men in society who act as teachers and give the society guidance and moral support), the king (who looks after the society and its general welfare by maintaining law and order in it), the cow and the bull/bullock/the ox (representing livestock and animal husbandry; the cow provides honey in the form of milk, while its male counterpart performs a number of tasks such as helping in farming, pulling the cart etc.), food grains such as rice and barley etc. (symbolising abundance supply of essential staple food for the entire world), and the honey (the essential healthy juices that give strength, vitality, vigour, stamina and energy to all the creatures) (22).

23. He who knows the secret of all this is blessed with having honey. His entire possessions are like honey. He dwells in and has access to all the Lokas (worlds and abodes) which are as sweet and pleasing as honey. [That is, a person who understands the secret of this Madhu Vidya, who understands the meaning behind the symbolism of the honey in this Sukta has access to all the best of virtues and glories in creation. He would, for example, have access to the best of knowledge and skills, the best of powers and potentials, both physical and mental, the best of healthy animals and food, the best of assets in this world etc. He is surrounded by the best of glories and majesties in creation; all the best of things are available to him. He gets the greatest of fame and honours; he is deemed to be the most fortunate and blessed one amongst his peers.] (23).

24. The loud thundering and rumbling that is heard in the sky in the clouds symbolise the manifestation of Prajapati (i.e. Brahma, the creator as well as the benevolent caretaker of the entire creation) for the welfare of his own subjects. [This loud rumbling and thundering of the clouds are indicative of torrential rains, which are like the nectar of life being showered by the benevolent and magnanimous creator to answer the prayers of his thirsty and hungry subjects. The rain would make the land fertile and ensure abundance of food, water and livestock. This sound made by the cloud is like Prajapati telling his subjects not to worry, as he has finally come to provide them with all they had prayed for.]

‘Oh Ishwar (the Lord God), the benevolent sustainer and protector of his subjects! I stand up in reverence to honour and pay my obeisance to you. There is cloth on my right side that is meant to be offered to you. [This refers to the tradition of giving cloth as charity during religious sacrifices.] Oh Lord, remember me.’

Those who know and understand this (i.e. who understand the great import of this Sukta and its symbolism) have all their subjects (family, friends, subordinates, compatriots, kith and kin) compatible to them, favourably inclined to them, under their command and discipline. Such wise and exalted men are always remembered by Prajapati himself. [That is, the Lord God is always munificent, benevolent and magnanimous towards such wise people; they are always blessed by the Lord God.] (24).

Appendix—3

Purush Sukta

The ‘Purush Sukta’ is a prayerful hymn dedicated to Lord God Narayan who is also known as the Viraat Purush, the all-encompassing and all-pervading macrocosmic revelation of the supreme transcendental being called Brahm. It succinctly describes the genesis of creation and lauds the divine glories of the Viraat Purush. It has sixteen verses in all, and with a little variation, appears in Rig Veda (the 90th Sukta of its 10th Mandal), Yajur Veda (the 31st chapter, verse nos. 1-16), Atharva Veda (the 6th Sukta of 19th Kanda or section/division), Taittiriya Sanhita, Shatpath Brahmin and the beginning of Taittiriya Aranyaka. It also appears in Mudgal Upanishad of Rig Veda tradition, but here the numbers of verses are twenty.

Since this present volume is dedicated to the Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the Purush Sukta appearing in this Veda’s 31st chapter as verse nos. 1-16 are being quoted here.

1. OM salutations! That Purush (the Lord God, the Supreme Being) has thousands (i.e. uncountable) heads, thousands of eyes and thousands of legs. [That is, the Lord has a vast, all inclusive form that incorporates the entire living creation in its ambit. The word ‘thousands’ is a figure of speech to indicate the measureless vastness of the cosmic Lord.]

He surrounds (envelops, encloses, encircles) the entire land mass of this world (i.e. the whole creation) from all sides, and still remains ten fingers width above it. [That is, the Supreme Being is so immense and colossus in dimension that he is larger than the fathomless, endless and infinite creation, encompassing it from all sides but still remains larger than it. The Lord remains beyond the reach and definitions of this visible as well as invisible gross world, because the latter is but a tiny fraction of the Supreme Being, though he pervades throughout it in a uniform way.]

2. The present world, the one that has gone by (i.e. the past) and the one that would be in the future—all of them are nothing but a manifestation of the Supreme Being called the Purush. Besides this, he is the Ishwar of all the Gods as well as all other creatures who survive on food. [That is, he is the Lord who controls and has unquestioned sway over the entire creation. The Gods here refer to immortal beings who possess supernatural powers, and the creatures refer to ordinary beings who are mortal and depend upon food for their life.] (2).

3. The entire world—the present, the one that existed in the past, and the one that would exist in the future—are all a visible manifestation of the stupendous and magnificent glories and majesty of the Supreme Being called the Purush. He is greater, more magnificent, more majestic, more stupendous and more glorious than his own visible manifestation in the form of this world. He surpasses them in their majesty and glories.

The entire creation constituted of the five essential elements (earth, water, fire, air and sky) is only a fourth fraction of his vast colossus form. The rest of the creation, i.e. the remaining three parts consisting of the other divine worlds and abodes form his other three fourth part. [The divine abodes referred here are the heavens where divine Gods of various denominations live, such as Vaikunth where Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector lives, Brahm Loka where Brahma the creator lives, and Shiva Loka where the concluder Shiva has his abode, besides the heavens where all other Gods live along with their king known as Indra in the Indra Loka as well as other higher or lower rung abodes of all other Gods.] (3).

4. The Supreme Being known as Purush resides in the exalted, glorious and divine heaven called the 'Tripadvibhut' represented by his three fourth form (as explained in verse no. 3 above) in his radiant, splendid, glowing and self-illuminated Self. [This form has been elaborately described in Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition.] This majestic, glorious and radiant form of the Lord is beyond the purview of Maya and the world influenced, driven and ridden by it. [In other words, since Maya, representing all the qualities coming under the definitions of delusions, illusions and darkness caused by ignorance of the reality, has its influence limited to this mortal world of material sense objects, and it is unable to extend its influence to the heavens where the Supreme Being resides. It is here that the latter shines with his splendid halo. The implication of this observation is clear—only those creatures who are able to overcome the effects of Maya in this world are the ones whose inherent divinity enshrined in their Atma, or pure conscious soul, would come to the fore. For the rest, they remain engulfed by a veil of darkness of ignorance.]

This visible world has been created out of the Lord's one fraction only. In other words, he has symbolically covered the entire world by his single foot. [Since the world is so vast, infinite and endless in dimension, one can well imagine the size of the Being whose single foot is so colossus.] He encompasses the entire animate as well as inanimate world which represents only one-fourth part of his entire cosmic form. This visible known world is only one-fourth part or aspect of the Supreme Being known as Purush. The remaining part of the creation constitutes the Lord's other three parts or fractions (4).

5. It is from that primary Supreme Being that the Viraat was born. [This Viraat is the colossus, all-inclusive, macrocosmic gross body of the entire creation; the word 'Viraat' alludes to the Purush referred to in the scriptures as the revelation of Brahm at the macro level of creation, and from whom the rest of the creation came into being. According to Purans, this Viraat is also referred to as Vasudeo, Vishnu and Narayan amongst many other names.]

It is the same Supreme Being who illuminated (revealed, manifested) himself in an immensely glorious, radiant and splendid form as the ancient Adhi Deva (the primary God; the parent God) of the Viraat Purush. He was called Hiranyagarbha in this divinely illuminated manifestation.

Later on, he revealed other forms such as the earth (the various worlds—such as the terrestrial, nether and heavens) and creature with a body (who would inhabit them—such as reptiles, birds, humans, Spirits, Gods etc.) (5).

6. The Supreme Being created curd, butter and other nourishing liquids from the Yagya Purush (the personified form of the sacred fire, the Fire God) from offerings

made to the sacred fire sacrifice. [In other words, all the herbs and other excellent things that were offered to the fire during the sacrificial ritual done to initiate the process of creation by the Supreme Being in his manifestation of the Viraat Purush were used as raw material which were cooked in the sacred fire, and this produced the things which would be needed by the newly born creation for its nutritional requirements as well as for its maintenance, healthy life, happiness, sustained development and growth.]

Besides this, he produced those creatures who would live in the air (birds, insects), in the forests (wild animals) and villages (domesticated animals as well as human beings) (6).

7. It is from this personified deity of the fire sacrifice, called the Yagya Purush or the Fire God representing the Supreme Being, that the sacred hymns of the three primary Vedas, such as the Rig, Sam and Yajur Vedas, were created. It is from him that all the Chandas (the poetic style in which all the hymns were composed) were also created. [It is obvious because without the Chandas the Vedas could not be revealed, for any kind of narration, whether sacred or not, words and a tidy system of grammar for their arrangement is needed so that they make any sense.] (7).

8. It is from him (the sacred fire of the sacrifice personified as the Yagya Purush) that the horses, the cows, the sheep and goat were created. These animals have two rows of teeth (8).

9. The Gods, mystics and great sages and seers respectfully seated this first divine revelation of the Fire God in the form of the Yagya Purush on a seating mat made of Kush grass and worshipped him (9).

10. When this Purush divided himself, how many optional choices or alternatives were there for him? What was his mouth? What were his arms? What formed his thighs? What are his legs called? (10).

11. The Brahmins (the elderly learned men in society) were his symbolic mouth (i.e. they were created from his mouth). The Kshatriyas (the warrior class) were his symbolic arms (i.e. they were created from his arms). The Vaishayas (the trading community) represented his two thighs (i.e. they were created from his thighs). And the Shudras (the labour class) were created out of his legs (i.e. they were created from his legs) (11).

12. The Moon was created from the Mana of this divine Purush. [The Mana refers to the complex of mind and heart covering such virtues as emotions and sentiments having their seat in the heart as well as the various functions of the mind such as the ability to think, focus attention, remember etc.]

The Sun was created from his eyes. [That is, the Sun is the manifestation of the Viraat Purush's divine ability to see. It burns with the celestial fire so as to light the dark realm for the benefit of the different creatures that would gradually be created from this divine Purush. The light of the Sun enables the creatures to see, and hence the Sun is the symbolic eye of the Supreme Being.]

The wind was created from his ears. [The wind or air is the medium through which sound travels from one point to another. This is because sound travels in waves, and the air is the perfect medium for this transmission. The ear is the

instrument in the body that is created precisely for the purpose of hearing, and hence the medium that helps propagation of sound, i.e. the air or the wind element, is said to be created from the ears of the Supreme Being. The skin, and for that matter all other organs of the body, also feel the touch of the wind blowing over them, but none of them can hear. Hearing is the exclusive domain of the ear.]

And finally, the fire was created from the mouth. [The mouth takes in food, and the food is converted into energy for the creature. So the mouth is like the opening of the oven or the mouth of the sacrificial fire pit in which the initial offerings were made in this sacrifice done to initiate the process of creation. It is only when fuel in the form of offerings are made to the sacrificial fire that the flame leaps up from the fire pit. Besides this, the words a man speaks have the same potentials as that of fire. For instance, large crowds can be excited into riots or great revolutions ignited by a good orator who uses this mouth to inspire and motivate his audience; armies are motivated and great successes achieved by the spoken words of the commander; it is the word of an enlightened teacher which would 'fire-up' the dormant spark of spiritualism in a disciple; the word can make or mar relationships. That is why we have phrases as 'he spewed fire and brimstone during his rabble rousing speech', or 'he stoked the fire of emotions by his fiery words'.] (12).

13. It is from the navel of the divine Purush that the Antariksha (the outer sky where the planets are situated) was created. [The navel is situated in the central part of the body, so this area of the sky also is situated at the symbolic center of the vast space of the sky.]

The Duo Loka (heaven) was created from his head. [The head is located on the top of the body, and the heaven also forms the highest point or the citadel of creation.]

The Prithivi (earth) was created from his legs (foot). [The legs are the lowest part of the body, so according to this conception of creation, the earth is its base or foundation. That is why we stand on the earth upon our 'legs' and not on our heads.]

The various Dishaas (directions) were created from the ears. [Previously it has been already said in verse no. 12 that the wind or air has its origin in the ear. The directions is where the air or wind lives, and it is from the directions that sound is heard. That is why, when one hears something, one turns one ears in that direction.]

In this way, the entire creation has been visualised as having its origin in that primary Purush known as Viraat (13).

14. To continue the cosmic fire sacrifice that was initiated by the Gods in order to start the process of creation, the divine Purush was offered as a symbolic sacrificial offering. Other ingredients used to continue this fire sacrifice of creation were the various symbolic offerings made, such as that of liquid butter in the form of the spring season, the firewood in the form of the summer season, and all other sanctified offerings called 'Havi' in the form of the winter season. [These seasons cover the entire cycle of one full year. They represent the three phases of life. All of them are equally important in the cycle of creation represented by the year—it starts with the spring season when new life 'springs' forth from virtually nowhere, followed by the prolonged summer season when the man reaches adulthood, works hard to feed his family by keeping the hearth in his household warm and the oven lit by keeping them well stocked with 'firewood', and finally the winter season which symbolises old age when the food that he had stocked in his larder as reserve 'Havi' is now used to feed him when he is no longer able to fetch fresh firewood and light the fire in the kitchen. These three seasons symbolize the origin, the growth and development, and the

conclusion of creation. ‘Spring’ stands for origin of life; ‘Summer’ stands for expansion of life and activity; and ‘Winter’ stands for hibernation and chill when life comes to a standstill.] (14).

15. At the time of this cosmic fire sacrifice done by the Gods to initiate the process of creation, the Gods visualised that they have symbolically tied the Viraat Purush just like a sacrificial animal is tied prior to it being sacrificed. For this purpose, they had used the seven oceans as the girdle or the band by which they had limited the movement of this sacrificial Purush. [In other words, the would-be creation would be girdled on all the four sides with the seven oceans. Or, the entire living world would be located in the area which would have the seven oceans as its outer periphery. This alludes to the fact that, by and by when life finally appeared on earth, it would be on a land mass that would be surrounded on all the sides by the oceans. These oceans would act like moats around a fort—a metaphoric way of saying that all the creatures who would inhabit the earth would be living in a virtual prison.]

The various types of Chandas (styles of poetic compositions in which the hymns of the Vedas were composed—such as Gayatri, Jagati, Trishtup, Anushtup etc.) became the fuel called ‘Samidha’ used during the fire sacrifice (15).

16. The exalted Gods worshipped the divine Purush by way of the fire sacrifice as narrated above. Dharma (the virtues of righteousness, probity and propriety) was the first fruit of this fire sacrifice. The Gods used this Dharma to acquire great fame, majesty, honour and dignity. Being blessed with these eclectic attributes and empowered by Dharma, they are able to live in the heaven where that Supreme Being also lives. [In other words, if we too follow the tenets of Dharma, if we too become righteous and proper like the Gods, we can also acquire great name and fame, majesty and dignity, honour and respect in the society which would be tantamount to living in the heaven. Dharma was the first product of the fire sacrifice done by the Gods—i.e. the result of any auspicious deed is always good and noble. Just as the fire sacrifice cannot produce negative results, or ‘A-dharma’, any deed done auspiciously and righteously can never produce negative results.] (16).

Appendix—4

Surya Sukta

The Rishi (the sage who had first visualised and said this Hymn) is Vibhraad. The patron deity to whom it is dedicated is Surya (the Sun God). The Chanda (the poetical style employed to compose it) is called Jagati. The Sun God is the deity in the heavens who is the most dazzling and splendid; the Sun is a vivid display of the glories of the Supreme Being known as Brahm; the Sun is Brahm personified in a most splendid and radiant form. He is regarded as one of the five divine Gods who are worshipped as manifestations of Brahm. This Surya Sukta is used in the prayers that are offered daily to the Sun God. It is believed that this prayer has great mystical curative powers in skin diseases.

1. Let that grand and most majestic, magnificent, dazzling and splendid Sun God—who inspires the Wind God in the form of the spark of life called Pran (life-consciousness) to sustain, nourish, protect and look after the welfare of the subjects of this creation, and therefore acquires great respect, honour, majesty and fame for himself—have an eternal life. Let him bless his subjects (the creatures of this world) also with a long life. Let him drink the sweet and divine Som juice that is offered to him in celebration of this grand creation and its life (1).

2. For the purpose of showing light to the creation and enabling the process of sight to become effective, the transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm has kept aloft this most splendid, radiant, dazzling and majestic Sun as an eternal fountain of fire. The Sun is a fireball of light and energy that gives eternal light, heat and energy to this creation (2).

3. Oh the Sun God who is a personification of Pavak (fire) and Varun (water)! [The Sun is obviously a fireball of fire and energy called Pavak. The fact that the rain-bearing clouds are formed due to evaporation of water from the ocean under the influence of the heat of the sun, and the very obvious observation that a man perspires under its heat, thereby bringing out water drops that were hitherto hidden in the body, implying that the Sun God is a living deity who stands for fire as well as for water. The surface of the Sun appears to be boiling like a pot of hot water put in fire. Therefore, the Sun is regarded as the personification of both the Fire and the Water Gods.]

The way you respectfully behold, are kind to and take care of those who move upwards or forward (on the noble and auspicious path of righteousness and religiosity), you should see (treat) all others with the same grace, magnanimity and benevolence. [That is, even as those who are religious, righteous, holy and pious are fortunate enough to move upwards, or forward, on the path to glory, majesty and fame as well as emancipation and salvation, those who are less fortunate should also be graced by you equally because you are so graceful, benevolent, kind and magnanimous by nature. This stanza means that the Sun God is equally kind to all the

creatures of this creation. He takes no sides; he is unbiased; he is equitable towards all.] (3).

4. Oh divine and glorious Ashwinikumars¹! I most respectfully invite you to come to the sacred fire sacrifice astride a magnificent chariot which is as splendid and radiant as the sun. Participate in the fire sacrifice and complete it by offering oblations to the sacred fire just like the Moon God had done in some ancient time (4).

[Note—¹The twin Aswinikumars are the sons of the Sun God and the medicine men of the Gods.]

5. Oh Sun God! You are the chief and the leading deity who remains in the forefront of all excellent exercises such as doing holy fire sacrifices; you are the one who destroys and obliterates all the sins and misdeeds and their ill effects; your good name and fame has expanded and spread over the whole world; you are the one who sits on a high seat reserved for those who are exalted and honourable; you are well conversant with the intricacies and secrets of heaven.

I hereby invoke you most reverentially and respectfully in all traditional ways established for this purpose, in a wholesome manner without any reservation, and in a routine manner as well as in a special manner. [That is, I employ all possible means to request you to come and be respectfully seated in this religious ritual. Be kind to bless me and personally grace this fire sacrifice.] (5).

6. At the time of creation of water, the Moon, which is surrounded by a bright halo of light, inspires the water element in the sky (which is present in the form of the moisture to precipitate as rain upon the earth). At this particular time when it is made possible that the two forms of water—one in the form of invisible moisture, and the other in the form of visible rain drops—unite (to create rainfall), the learned Brahmins (who are wise and senior in society) offer their prayers to the Moon God, who is also known as 'Ven' as well as 'the son of the Sun God'.

[The halo around the moon is seen in the sky when there is high density of moisture or water vapour in the higher reaches of the atmosphere. It is a harbinger of rainfall; the appearance of this halo around the moon is an indication that soon there would be rainfall. The halo is an indication that saturation point is reached and soon water would precipitate as rain. The halo is circular in shape because the disc of the moon is also circular in outline. Hence, as soon as those who are wise see this halo around the moon become sure that sooner than later there would be rain. In other words, the very appearance of the halo around the moon is an indication that the cosmic water element which is normally invisible and unusable for the creature on earth would soon become visible and usable for him.

The Moon is called a son of the Sun God because it inherits the shine of the latter, and derives its glories also from the latter like any other son who would inherit the legacy of his acclaimed father.] (6).

7. What an awe inspiring and astonishing spectacle is this that the Sun—which is like the Atma or soul (i.e. life) of the entire creation (world) consisting of animate as well as inanimate world, which is a treasury and a fount of brilliant rays, which is a symbolic eye of the three Gods—viz. Mitra (a friendly God), Varun (the Water God) and Agni (the Fire God)—rises to illuminate and drench the three worlds with its splendid light and glories. These three worlds are the following—the Bhu Loka

(the terrestrial world), the Dyu Loka (heavens) and the Antariksha (the sky and the vast recesses of the solar system) (7).

8. Let the Sun God, who is a kind and gracious benefactor of all, please come to and bless my auspicious fire sacrifice which is being done with the offerings of the best of cereals that I have to offer to it, and which is a holy and laudable exercise.

Oh immortal Gods! Be happy, contented and satisfied with my offerings, and accept my invitation to you to come and bless me. In whatever way you deem fit and proper, bless all our livestock/cattle such as cows etc. when you arrive to bless my fire sacrifice (8).

9. Oh Indra! Oh Sun God! Wherever you shine today, all those realms are under your command and control. [Indra is the king of Gods, and therefore of the body of the man because the Gods have their symbolic residence in various organs of the man's body. The man is the Lord of the living creation as he is at the top rung of the evolutionary ladder, and he controls the entire animate as well as the inanimate world. The Sun is obviously most essential for life to survive on this planet. One can well imagine what would happen to this world in the absence of the Sun. In other words, the worshipper requests these two divine Gods, Indra and Sun, to bless him and empower him so that he can remain the lord and master of all his subjects.] (9).

10. Oh the Sun God who is the illuminator of the world! You are able to cover the whole world in a fleeting moment as soon as you appear. [This is a reference to the fact that as soon as the time of sunrise arrives, the whole sky and the earth below are illuminated.] You are the only one who lights up the world; you are the only one who gives this world its light and illumination (10).

11. The divinity, the majestic authority and glorious powers of the Sun that makes it a God lies in the evident fact that it stands in between the Ishwar (the invisible supreme Lord God) and the visible creation to control and regulate all the planets and stars.

When the Sun is surrounded by green rays (which are symbolic of the declining light of the Sun which gradually begins to fade as dusk approaches), the dark shroud of the night covers the whole world (11).

12. In the Duo Loka (heavens), the Sun assumes the form of the Mitra (a friendly and benevolent God) and Varun (the Water God), and looks benevolently and graciously at all the creature.

Another of its forms is the eternally and uniformly unchanging brilliant and splendorous white disc called the Shukla (white, bright, radiant) form.

There is yet another symbolic form which is called Krishna because it is dark. This is the calmer form which is accepted by the Indris (i.e. the organs of the body).

[This refers to the night when the Sun appears to be dark because there is darkness all around. This is the period when the man sleeps and his organs become calm and relaxed. It is an established fact that the Sun has not gone anywhere during the night; it is very much in the sky in exactly the same position where it was during the day time. So the fact that inspite of the presence of the dazzling and bright fireball of the Sun being present in the sky in a perpetual manner there is still an all-encompassing darkness during the night shows that the Sun indeed has a dark side to it! This is the time of the 'day' when it is dark and the man sleeps and relaxes. It must be noted here that we always count a period of twenty four hours as a 'day' as a

normal convention, and not as ‘one half day and one half night’. This is exactly because of the fact that the Sun has not gone anywhere, so what we regard as the ‘night’ is actually the day with the darker side of the Sun facing the world.

This observation is established by the fact that some part of the world has the Sun shining brilliantly over it, while the other part is dark. The Sun is actually uniformly brilliant and un-moving. It is the earth that spins on its axis to create this impression.

One would marvel at the imagination and logical powers of ancient sages and seers who could prove their points with immaculate logic and irrefutable rationality.] (12).

13. Oh the Supreme Being in the form of the Sun God! Indeed you are great and eminent. Oh Aditya (the Sun God)! You are truly great and eminent. Your divine glories are sung and your astounding greatness lauded because of the fact that you are truly a personification of such honourable and laudable virtues. You are indeed and truly great and eminent; you are indeed and truly divine and magnificent (13).

14. Oh the Sun God! You are truly great in majesty, splendour, fame and grandeur. You are greater in importance and mystical values than the sacred fire sacrifice called the Yagya, and you are more venerable than and surpass the majestic virtues that come under the definition of the word Mahima (renowned fame, majesty, grandeur, dignity, greatness, importance, venerability, exaltation etc.).

You are the benevolent benefactor for the Gods. You are their chief and the most prominent amongst them.

You are a formidable source of brilliant light that is all-encompassing, the light that covers every nook and corner of the world (14).

15. The brilliant rays of the Sun are able to devour and decimate the entire asset of Indra represented by the rains, and at the same time are responsible for restoring them and enhancing them by producing them once again—I most reverentially enshrine that almighty Sun God in my heart (15).

[Note—This refers to the fact that the heat of the sun’s rays can be so intense that it can evaporate water falling down upon the earth as rain and consequentially cause draught. On the contrary, the same sunlight and the heat of its rays cause water to evaporate from the oceans and form moisture laden air that converts into clouds which pour rain upon this earth, thereby replenishing the lost water which had been ‘devoured’ by the heat of the sun’s rays. In other words, the Sun God can create as well as destroy this creation because he has those majestic powers which are the exclusive prerogative of the Supreme Being or the Lord God.]

16. Oh Gods! Let the rising Sun today remove all my sins and misdeeds as well as all my faults and shortcomings. Let Mitra (a friendly God), Varun (the Water God), Aditi (the mother of Gods and of the Sun), Sindhu (the ocean personified as a deity), Prithivi (the earth personified as a deity) and Swarga (heavens personified as a deity) all approve of my prayer, and let them endorse what I say (16).

17. Behold! The mighty, magnificent and majestic Sun God is arriving on his golden and splendourous chariot through the path of the fathomless sky which is covered in darkness (of night, and lighting up the sky in the front and behind as he passes across it). He inspires the Gods and humans to become active and diligent in their respective work, and he oversees them in their work as he traverses his glorious path across the

sky. [This refers to the arrival of the day when humans get up from sleep of the previous night and return to their vocations and routine work of life. The Gods are similarly inspired to remain vigilant because their deeds cannot be hidden in the dark any longer. Since the different Gods are said to have their symbolic presence in the body of the man himself, this verse implies that the man must be vigilant and careful in what he does, as all his actions are being watched by the Supreme Being who illuminates the world and also presides over life in it in the form of the Sun.] (17).

Appendix—5

My esteemed reader is informed here that the different metaphysical and spiritual concepts that are an integral part of the Upanishads, and need more elaboration, analysis and a detailed explanation, have been published by this author (Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia) as independent Books. Their titles and links are mentioned below. Those readers who may like to have a further reading on the topics and subjects related to concepts of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism as envisioned in the Upanishads may download these Books from the following two websites:

Websites:

- (i) Internet Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia
- (ii) www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com

Title of relevant Books as referred to herein above:

- (1) Title : ‘Brahm’ in the eyes of the Upanishads

Page URL :-

- (i) <https://archive.org/details/6-brahm-in-the-eyes-of-the-upanishads>
- (ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/brahm_in_the_eyes_of_the_upanishads.pdf

- (2) Title : SANYAS with Vairagya Shatakam of Bhartrihari

Page URL :-

- (i) <https://archive.org/details/9-sanyas-with-vairagya-shatkam-of-bhartihari>
- (ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/sanyas-with_vairagya_shatkam_of_bhartihari.pdf

- (3) Title : Tattvas (elements) and Gunas (qualities): According to the Upanishads

Page URL :-

- (i) <https://archive.org/details/11-tattvas-gunas-according-to-upanishads>
- (ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/tattvas_and_gunas_of_creation_according_to_upanishads.pdf

- (4) Title : ‘Maya’ The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation As elucidated in the ‘Upanishads’ & ‘Ram Charit Manas’

Page URL :-

- (i) <https://archive.org/details/13-maya-the-whirlpool-of-delusions-in-creation>
- (ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/maya-the_whirlpool_of_delusions_in_creation.pdf

(5) Title : The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads

Page URL :-

(i) <https://archive.org/details/18-the-metaphor-of-the-hansa-in-the-upanishads>

(ii) [https://tulsidas-ram-](https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/the_metaphor_of_the_hansa_in_the_upanishads.pdf)

[books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/the_metaphor_of_the_hansa_in_the_upanishads.pdf](https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/the_metaphor_of_the_hansa_in_the_upanishads.pdf)

(6) Title: OM and NAAD—The Cosmic Manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness According to the Upanishads

Page URL :-

(i) <https://archive.org/details/48-om-and-naad-the-cosmic-manifestation-of-the-supreme-consciousness-according-to-the-upanishads>

(ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/om_and_naad-the_cosmic_manifestation_of_the_supreme_consciousness_according_to_the_upanishads.pdf

(7) Title : Metaphysical & Spiritual Concepts of the Upanishads Explained. [This book covers the following topics: 1—Atma and the various Sheaths; 2—The Body of the creature (The body of the living being consists of Bhuts, Dhaatus, Tattvas etc.); 3—The various States of Existence of Consciousness; 4—Macrocosm and Microcosm; 5—Vrittis and Vasanas; 6—The Gunas; 7—Mental Flux; 8—The Five Basic Elements; 9—Brahm Randhra, Brahm Dwar and Brahm Vivar; 10—Meditation and contemplation; 11—Spirituality; 12—Dhyan (Dhyaan); 13—Upasana; 14—Mukti; 15—Maya; 16—Prakriti (Nature); 17—The Vital Winds or Prans; 18—Kalaa; 19—The Tattwas; 20—Theory of Karma; 21—Akash (Sky element and its subtlety); 22—Sat-Chit-Anand; 23—Bhumika; 24—Scientific view; 25—Diagrams and Sketches.]

Page URL :-

(i) <https://archive.org/details/51-metaphysical-spiritual-concepts-of-the-upanishads-explained>

(ii) [https://tulsidas-ram-](https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/metaphysical_concepts_of_upanishads_explained.pdf)

[books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/metaphysical_concepts_of_upanishads_explained.pdf](https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/metaphysical_concepts_of_upanishads_explained.pdf)

(8) Page Title : Concepts of Mantra, Japa, Tantra and Yantra According to the Upanishads

Page URL :-

(i) <https://archive.org/details/52-concepts-of-mantra-japa-tantra-and-yantra-according-to-the-upanishads>

(ii) [https://tulsidas-ram-](https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/mantra_japa_yantra_tantra_according_to_upanishads.pdf)

[books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/mantra_japa_yantra_tantra_according_to_upanishads.pdf](https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/mantra_japa_yantra_tantra_according_to_upanishads.pdf)

(9) Page Title : Chakras and Naadis in the Body

Page URL :-

(i) https://archive.org/details/53-chakras-naadis-in-the-body_202205

(ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/chakras_naadis_in_body.pdf

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Facebook ID < www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8 >

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NOTE: Author's Books are available at:—

(1) www.amazon.com in its Kindle + Paper-Back Print Editions.

(2) www.pothi.com in a Print edition.

(3) www.draft2digital.com and its various vendors' platforms in E-Book edition:

URL: <https://www.draft2digital.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia>

(4) www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com

(5) Internet Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia

(6) Goodreads:

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai_Kumar_Chhawchharia

There are countless books based on Indian scriptures and their spiritual, metaphysical and theological principles written in English by Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia with a missionary zeal as his humble service to his beloved Lord Sri Ram.

These books are a 'book lover's dream come true' and stand out heads-over-shoulders in the realm of metaphysical, philosophical, devotional, spiritual and classical literature of India. Such as for example, there are Goswami Tulsidas' myriad works with Sri Ram as the central theme which are glittering like gems, poetically told, stupendous in beauty, marvelously narrated and contain a treasury of fathomless wisdom and deep insight into spiritualism, metaphysics and philosophy. Then there is Veda Vyas' glorious narration of the epic story of Sri Ram in Adhyatma Ramayan and Devi Puran Maha Bhagwat Ramayan. The Upanishads represent the epitome of Indian philosophical, metaphysical and spiritual treatises— the marvellous highest pinnacle that human thought can possibly reach. They are acclaimed the world over as highly evolved and intellectually enlightening books. The Vedas, on the other hand, are believed to be revealed books. The two form the two legs of Hinduism.

The author has presented a simple, day to day bilingual version (Hindi and English) of these stupendous texts. A huge array of information on Sri Ram and Hanuman culled from the Vedas, Upanishads, Purans, and myriad other sources have been systematically presented by the author in lucid, florid, easy flowing, vibrant and captivating English language— useful to a layman, a devotee, curious people,

research scholars, casual as well as serious readers, plain book lovers or connoisseurs of classical literature. A must read for everyone.

All the books have original text with line-to-line easy flowing English version with necessary explanatory notes, appendices, etc.

The list of books are as follows:

Detailed English versions with commentary on Books of ‘Goswami Tulsidas’:

- * Vairagya Sandipani of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Vinai Patrika of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Geetawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Kavitaawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Dohawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Janki Mangal of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Ram Lala Nahachu of Goswami Tulsidas
- * Parvati Mangal of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Barvai Ramayan of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand (Canto 1) [The other 6 Cantos, i.e. Ayodhya Kand, Aranya Kand, Kishkindha Kand, Sundar Kand, Lanka Kand, and Uttar Kand, are in the process of writing, and would be made available, one by one, as soon as they are ready for publication.]

Detailed English Books based on original texts of Goswami Tulsidas, with extensive commentary:

- * Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka Told in Slow Motion: in 2 Volumes (5Parts)
- * ‘Sundar Kand’ of Ram Charit Manas
- * The Kaagbhusund Ramayan or The Aadi Ramayan
- * The Divine Story of Lord Shiva’s marriage with Parvati (based on Ram Charit Manas, Parvati Mangal & Vinai Patrika)
- * Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita (based on Ram Charit Manas).
- * Ram Geeta: The Gospel of Lord Ram.
- * A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name.

Other Books on the theme of Lord Ram:

- * Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns
- * Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram.
- * Upanishads dedicated to Lord Ram & their Philosophy.
- * Saint Surdas’ “Ram Charitawali”.
- * The Chariot of God—Dharma Rath.
- * Bhakti—Devotion for Lord God.
- * Saints and Non-Saints, Their Character and Comparison.
- * ‘Ram Charit Manas’ (the holy lake containing the ambrosia in the form of the divine story describing the deeds and acts of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being upon earth) by Goswami Tulsidas—full text with English introduction.
- * Life sketch of Goswami Tulsidas.

The Trilogy of Books on the epic known as the ‘Ramayan’:

- * English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.

- * English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
- * English rendering of Devi Puran's Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

English Books dedicated to Lord Shiva:

- * Book 1= Marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati
- * Book 2= Sacred Hymns of Lord Shiva.
- * Book 3= Lord Shiva—His legend, Upanishads, Puran, Hymns & Parvati Mangal.

A Book in English dedicated to Lord Hanuman:

- * The Legendary Glory of Hanuman.

English Books explaining various spiritual and metaphysical concepts based on the Upanishads:

- * Chakras and Naadis in the human body.
- * Metaphysical & Spiritual Concepts of the Upanishads Explained
- * Concepts of Mantra, Japa, Tantra and Yantra According to the Upanishads
- * A True Guru (The Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor).
- * Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation.
- * The Triumvirate of Creation: According to the Upanishads.
- * The 'Pentagon of Creation'—The Panch Tattvas, Panch Bhuts, Panch Prans & Panch Koshas.
- * Revelation of Creation as envisioned in the Upanishads.
- * YOGA—Its Practice & Philosophy according to the Upanishads.
- * Who is a Guru?
- * The 24 Avtaars (incarnations) of Lord Vishnu.
- * The Viraat Purush—the cosmic, all-embracing form of the Supreme Being: as conceived in the Upanishads, Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, and Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * OM and NAAD: the cosmic revelation of Super Consciousness extensively explained and compiled from the Upanishads.
- * Vaak (spoken word), Akshar (alphabet) & Sristi (creation).
- * The concept of 'Kalaa'.
- * 'Brahm' in the eyes of the Upanishads.
- * 'Sanyas' with 'Vairagya Shatkam' of Bhartihari.
- * The 'Mahavakyas' (Great Sayings) of the Upanishads.
- * The 'Tattwas' (elements) and the Gunas (qualities) According to the Upanishads.
- * The Fundamental Elements and Character Traits of Creation as Enunciated in the Upanishads {available only on www.draft2digital.com }
- * The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

Other English Books on Hinduism and its Spiritual Philosophy (by Ajai kumar Chhawchharia):

- * Bhakti Sutra Mala
- * Shandilya Bhakti Sutra
- * Narad Bhakti Sutra
- * 'Vairagya Shatkam' of king-sage Bhartrihari.
- * The great ancient sages, seers, saints and enlightened kings of India.

- * The great sages, seers, saints and enlightened kings of ancient India {available only on www.draft2digital.com }
- * 'Arunachal Pancharatna & Rudra Ashtak'. {In English, co-produced by Rev. Janardan Kalianand-Swami of USA and Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia. }

***Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition.**

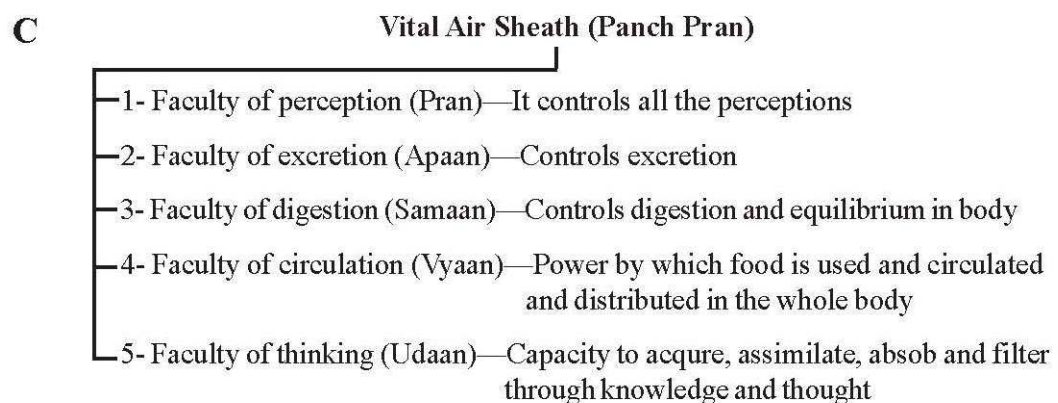
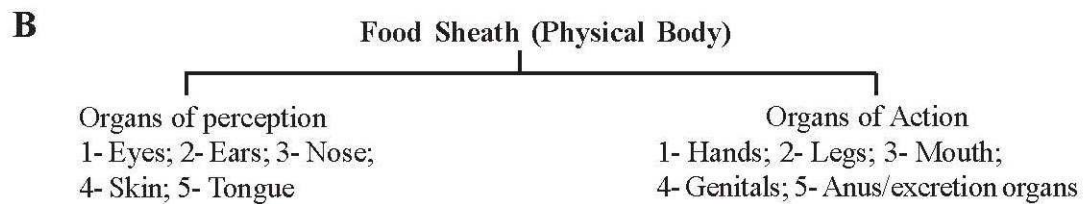
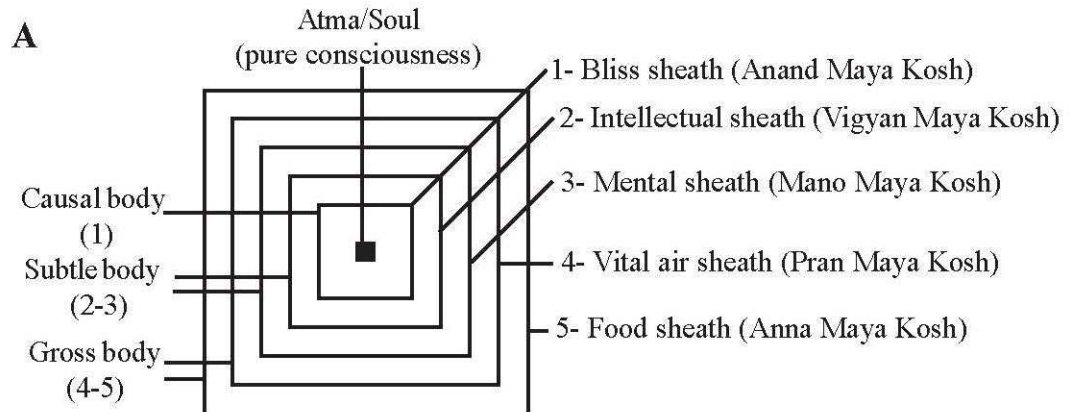
Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads;

NOTE: A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas' is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

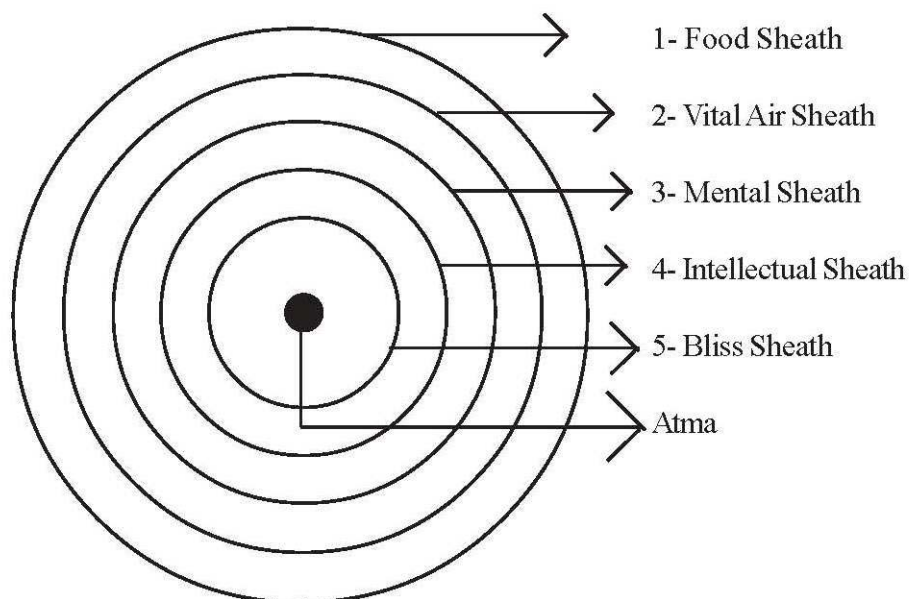
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Diagrams/Sketches explaining certain concepts of the Upanishads

Diagram of various sheaths and three bodies of the creature



The 5 Sheaths and Atma



Merging of Microcosmic Soul with Macrocosmic Soul

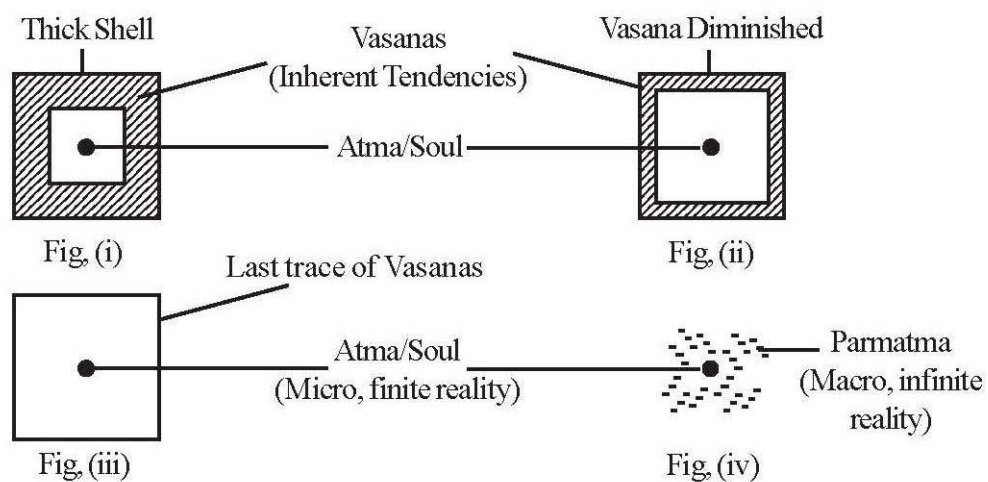
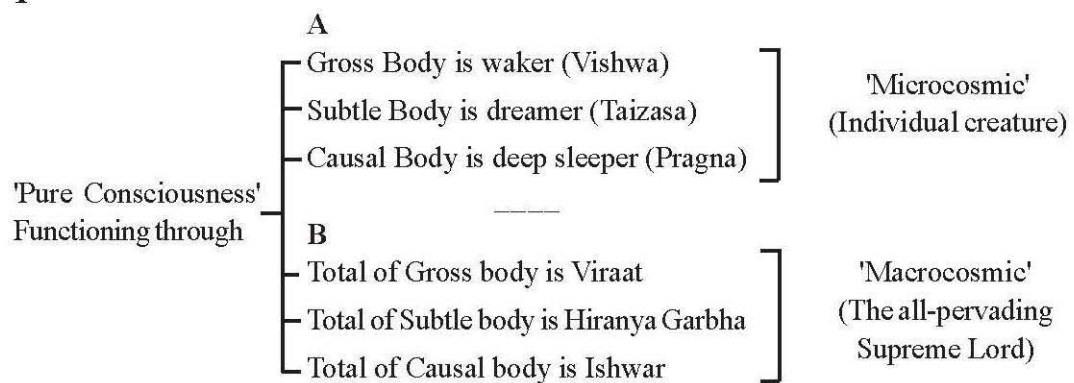


Figure shows how Atma merges with Parmatma by controlling Vasanas or Vrittis

1 Functioning of Pure Consciousness



2 Diagram depicting how Microcosm merges with Macrocosm

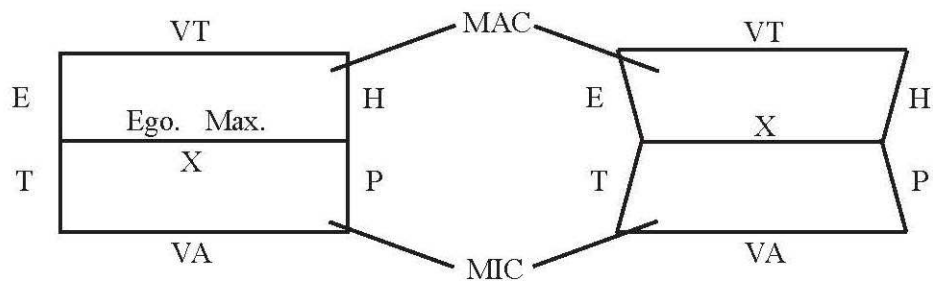


Fig (i)

Fig (ii)

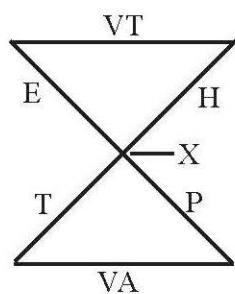


Fig (iii)

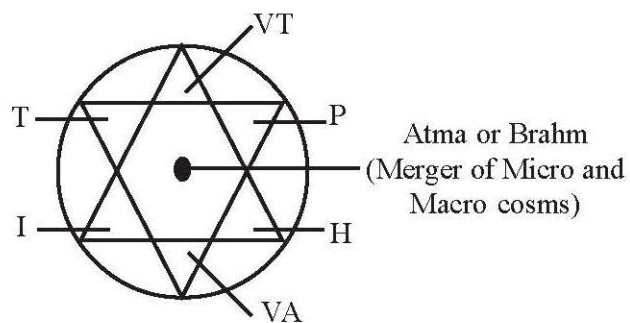
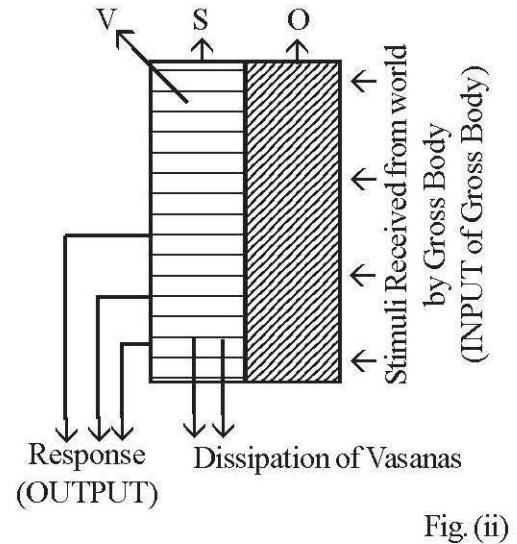
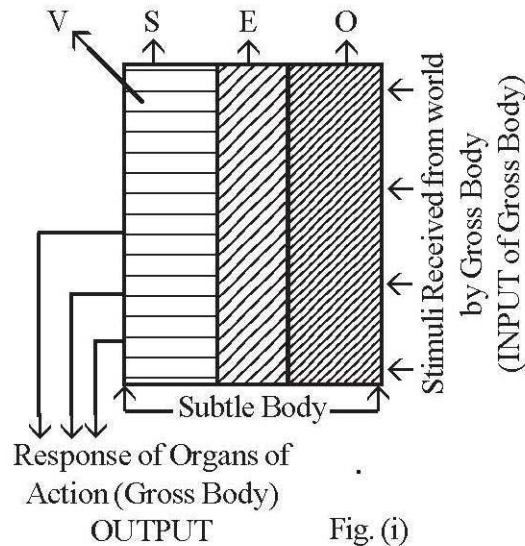


Fig (iv)

Key— VT = Viraat (Cosmic waker); VA = Vishwa (Waker); P = Pragna (Deep sleeper); T = Taijasa (Dreamer); H = Hiranya Garbha (Cosmic dreamer); I = Ishwar (Cosmic deep sleeper); X = Inherent tendency or demarcation line representing 'perceiver-feeler-thinker-doer'; Atma = Microcosmic pure self of individual; Brahm = Macrocosmic Soul of the universe; MAC = Macrocosm; MIC = Microcosm;

Diagram showing how Ego and desires effect the Mind



Key— S = Subjective Subtle Body (Intellect); O = Objective Subtle Body (Mind);
V = Vasanas (Inherent Tendencies or Inclinations); E = Ego/Desires

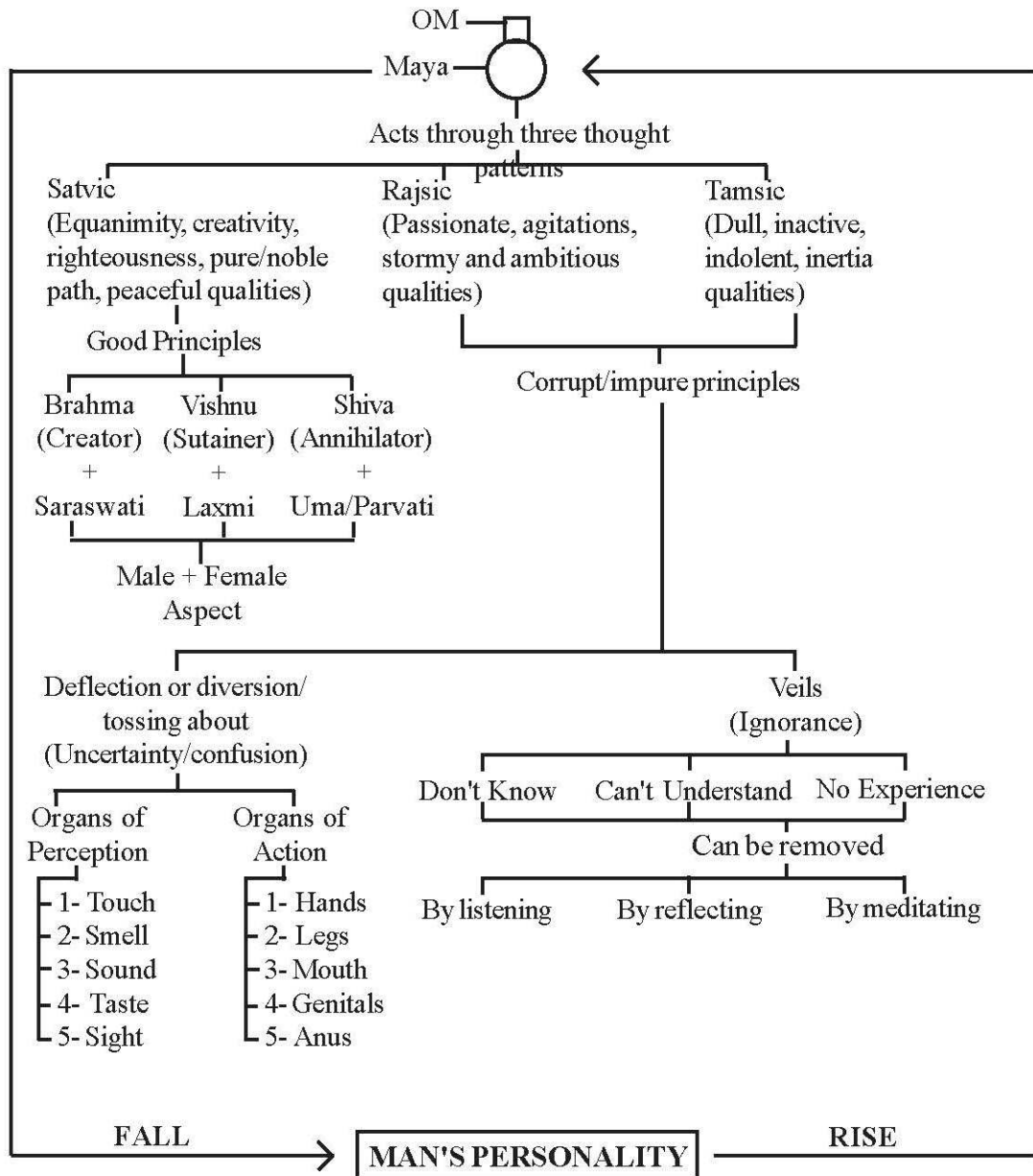
Explanation :- The stimuli received by the objective mind is passed to the subjective mind (intellect) through the constant interference of ego (Ahankar). Hence, while taking a decision, the intellect (Buddhi = बुद्धि) is influenced by the intervening ego (refer figure no. 1)

When ego is removed, there is direct coordination between the mind and the intellect and the former receives proper guidance from the latter. When actions are performed without interference by ego, no fresh Vasanas are deposited in the intellect. Those already present gradually dissipate away. In due course of time, the intellect is freed of all the Vasanas as well (refer figure no. 2).

This helps in purging of all the impurities associated with the soul and enveloping it like a layer or veil. When the veil is removed, the magnificence and brilliance of pure consciousness illuminates the creature.

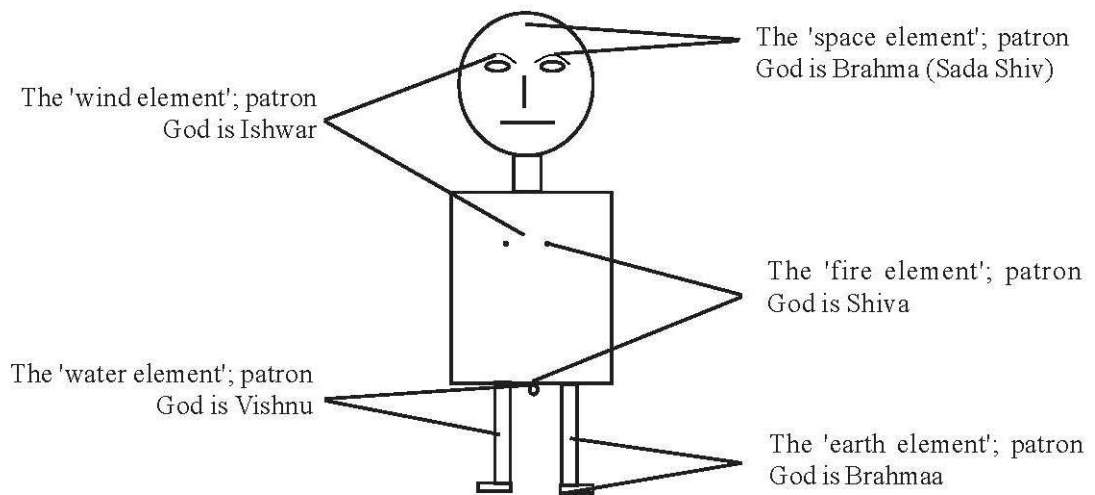
As is clear from the above diagram, when the ego and desire—which form the basic ingredients of the inherent tendencies of a creature—are dissipated by industrious effort, the pure Atma residing in the 3rd sheath (the causal body) of the creature can directly interact with the Intellect (the subjective subtle body) of the creature. This intellect is not now subject to any interference from Vasanas (fig. ii), and can act independently. The actions become pure, uncorrupted and scrupulous. The emphasis here is to put the intellect directly under the command of the Atma/soul without the interference of Vasanas, ego, desires and other inherent tendencies or inclinations that mire the soul as a result of (a) its past deeds and their results and (b) unfulfilled desires.

PERSONALITY OF MAN



**Diagram showing the predominance of the five elements
and their patron Gods in the Body**

(refer verse nos. 4-6, Canto 8, Jabaldarshano-panishad)



**Diagram showing the predominance of the five elements
and their shape and colour in the Body**

(refer verse nos. 2/135-141 Trishikhi Brahmano-panishad)

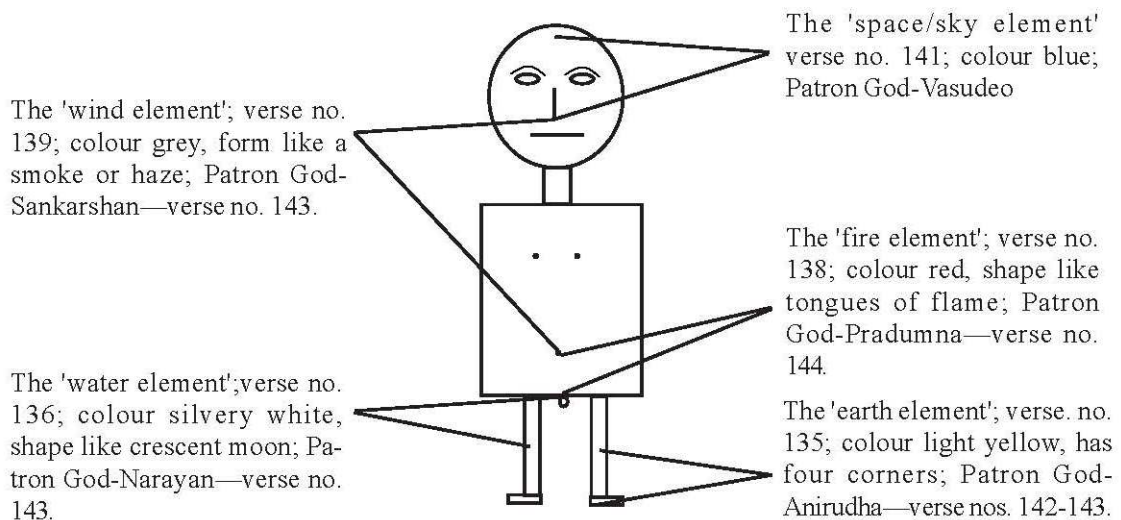


Diagram of Creation of the World from Viraat Purush
(Adhyatma Ramayan—Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos.63-69)

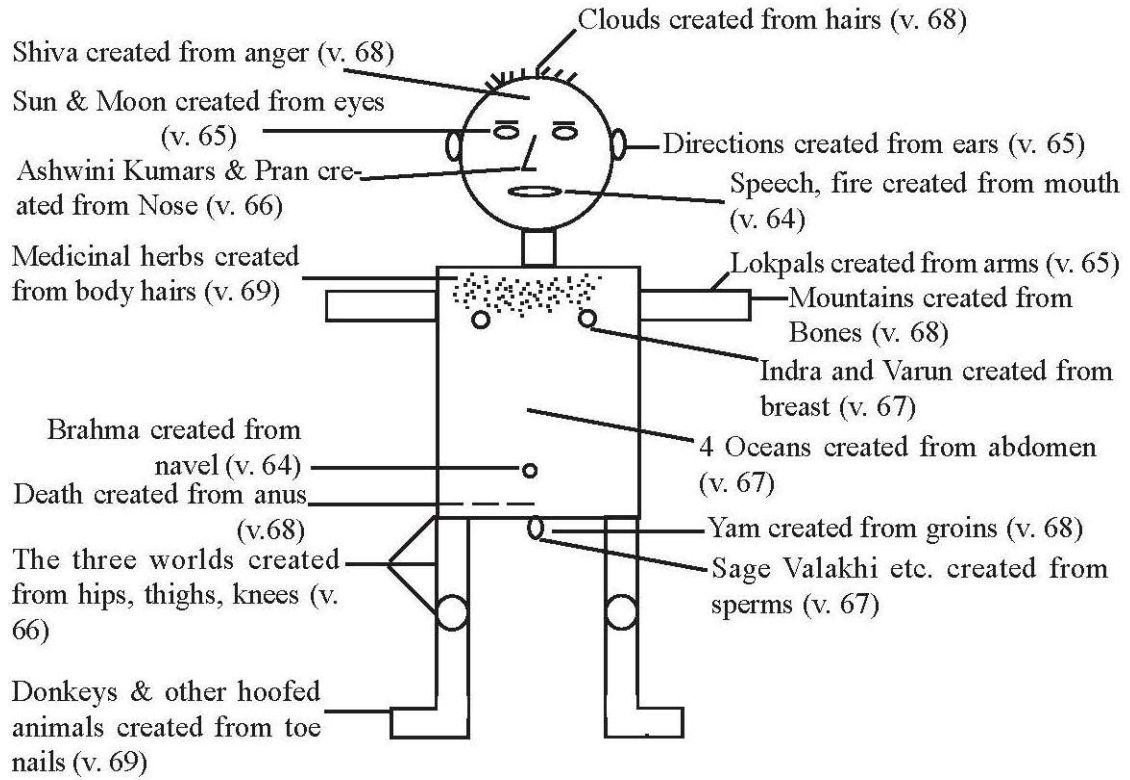
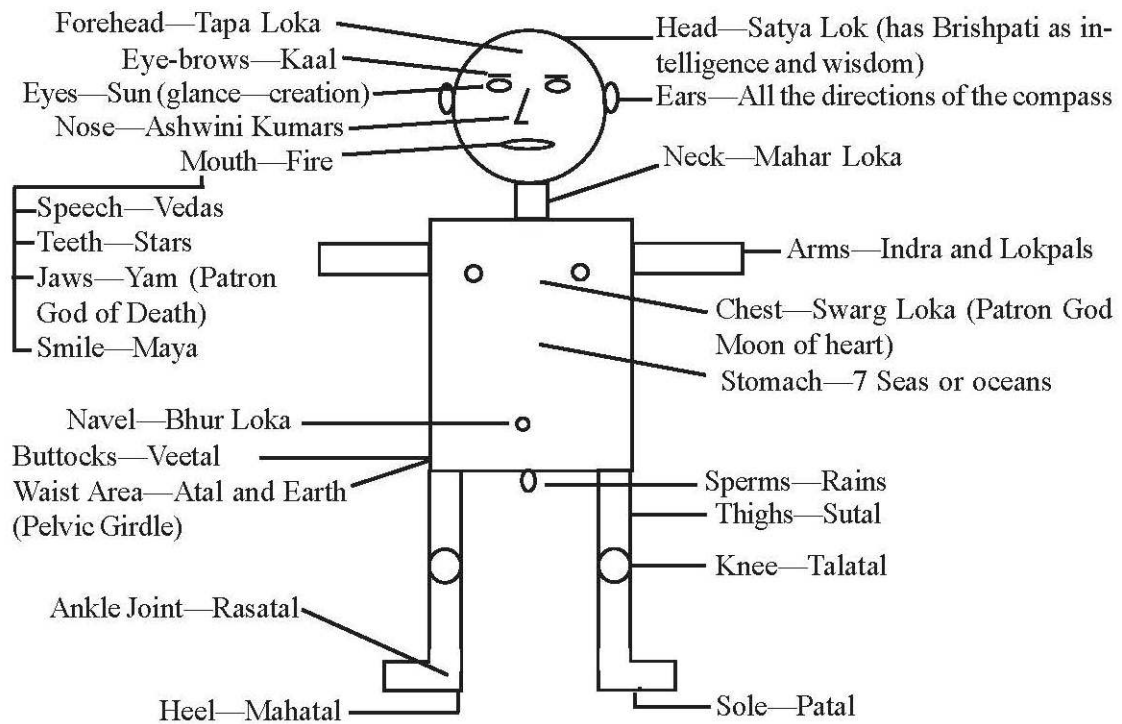


Diagram of Creation of the World from Viraat Purush

The Viraat Purush

(Adhyatma Ramayan—Aranya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 36-45)



Note :-(a) Eyes (Sun) = (i) Glances—Creation; (ii) Blink—Night; (iii) Open—Day
 (b) Body Hairs = Trees, Medicinal herbs, Creepers
 (d) Enlightenment/Wisdom/Knowledge = Glory, Fame, Renown

Chakras/subtle energy centers in the body

(Based on Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad of Rig Veda, Canto 3)

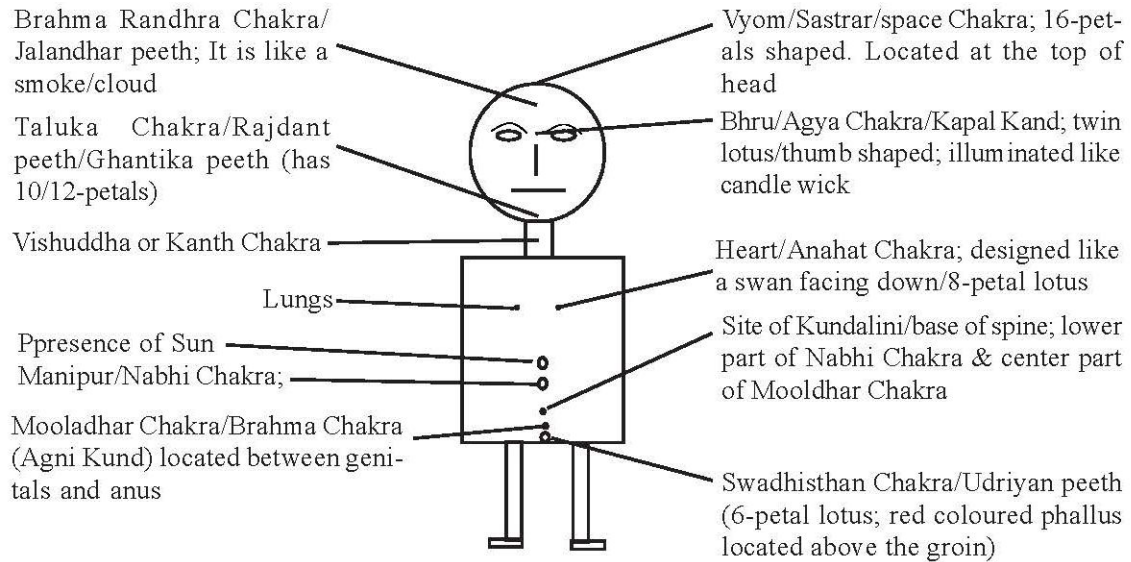


Fig (1)

Naadis: Nerves in the body

(Based on Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 4, verse 13-17)

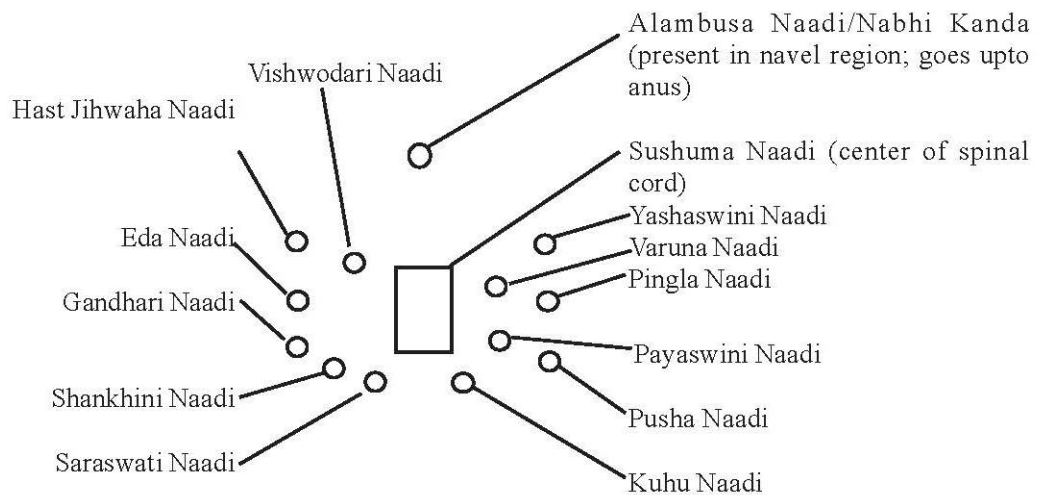
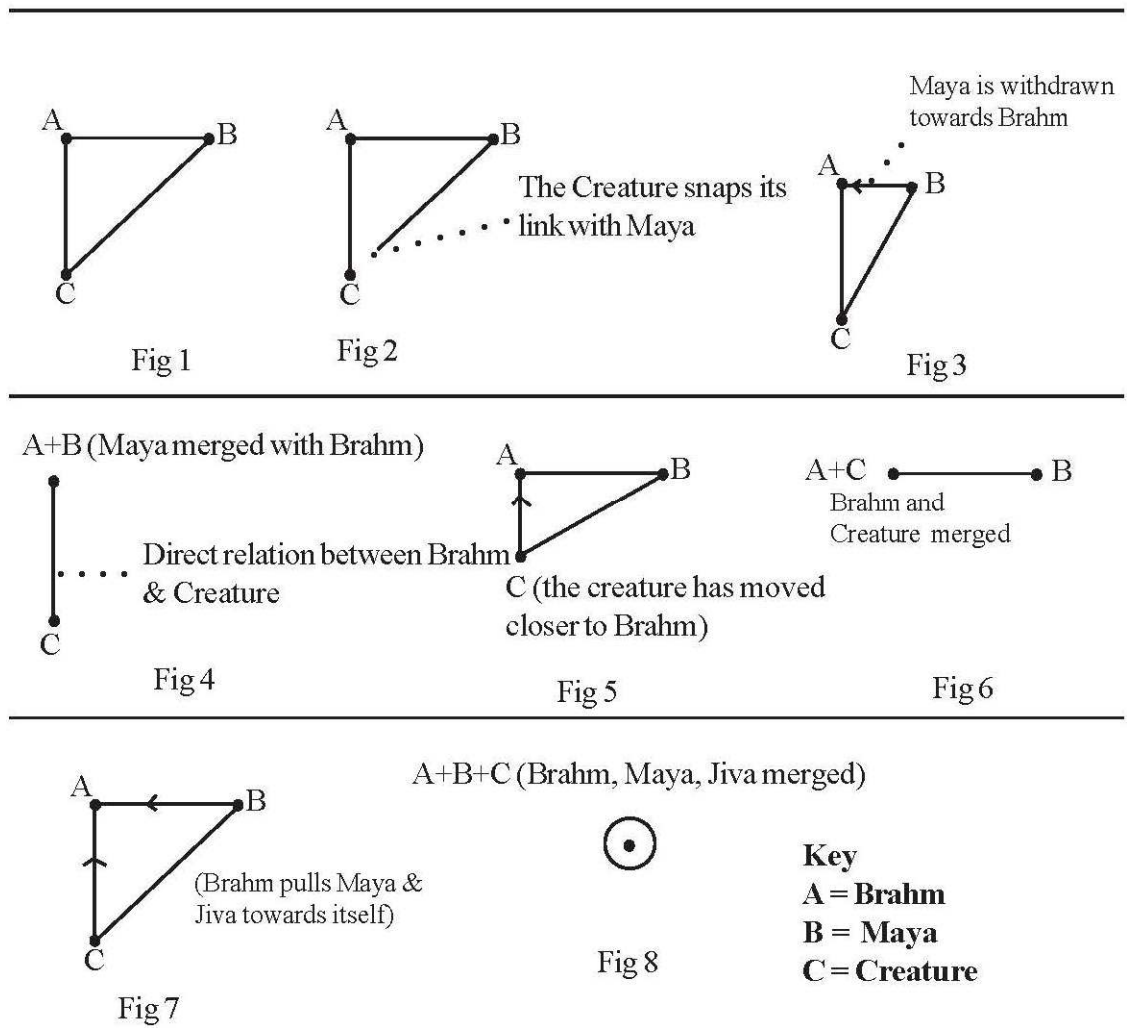


Fig (2)

(T.S. of Spinal Cord Region at the lower end)

Sketch Illustrating Relationship of Brahm, Maya & Jiva



(Relationship between Brahm, Maya and Jiva.)

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